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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCE · NEWS · FEATURES · VIEWS

BAREFOOTED ZEAL Devotees of the Black Nazarene, a life-size icon of Jesus Christ carrying a cross, clamber up its carriage at the start of Monday's daylong religious procession in Manila. JOHN BACORRO

Millions defy terror alert

Scores hurt as sea of pilgrims fights to touch Black Nazarene

By Jocelyn R. Uy, Philip Taboso and Jeannette Andrade

THE CROWD seems to get bigger and bolder each year. But as Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Tagle explained: "To understand it, you need to be a devotee. Outsiders do not understand."

No barrier, no threat to life and limb, not an even a terror alert raised by Malacañang could stem the crushing tide of devotees who jammed the streets in adoration of the iconic Black Nazarene of Quiapo, whose traditional procession yesterday was one of the biggest, longest and most guarded in memory.

The procession was already on its 12th hour as of 9 p.m. last night, with authorities expecting it to be over well past midnight.

Before Tagle could even give his final blessing during a Mass held at Quirino Grandstand in Manila, barefoot men and women made a mad dash to the stage and toppled security railings to be among the first to touch the image.

Scores were already hurt in this initial commotion before marshals were able to move the image to a carriage for the procession.

Police estimated up-to-8 million people crammed into the historic quarters of Manila seeking to touch the centuries-old and life-size icon of Jesus Christ that is believed to hold miraculous powers.

The human sea of Catholic pilgrims

MILLIONS A/2-3

FACE OF THE BLACK NAZARENE A devotee touches the hand of the Black Nazarene inside Quiapo Church in Manila. Millions of devotees joined the procession of the Black Nazarene, a life-size wooden statue of Jesus Christ carved in Mexico and brought to the Philippines in the 17th century. MARTIN SAN DIEGO

Gov't agents raid houses of terror group

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan
Paolo G. Montecillo
and Christine O. Avendaño

A RAID on three houses over the weekend that failed to capture a small group from Mindanao believed to be planning to bomb the Black Nazarene procession in Manila was what prompted President Aquino to raise a terror alert on the eve of the annual religious march.

"There is a threat and the President deemed it necessary to handle it himself to make sure all preparations are in place. It is better to be prepared than sorry," Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin said yesterday.

Two of the alleged safe houses were in Metro Manila, one was in the Basco

GOVT'S A/4

House eyes CJ condo's realty firm

By Gil C. Cabacungan

THE LEADER of the 11-member House prosecution team yesterday said that summoning officials of Megaworld Corp. to the Senate trial of Chief Justice Renato Corona was in the cards.

"It's possible," Iloilo Rep. Niel Tupas Jr. said in a text message to the Inquirer a week before the start of the impeachment trial of Corona for alleged corruption, betrayal of public trust and culpable violation of the Constitution.

Megaworld, owned by Andrew Tan, would be asked about the purported sale of a penthouse unit at its high-rise

HOUSE/A/11

Palace dared to look into Carpio assets

By Marlon Ramos

SENIOR Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, Malacañang's reported choice to succeed Chief Justice Renato Corona if he is ousted, has come under scrutiny in the Supreme Court.

Like Corona, Carpio is said to be ensconced in a multimillion-peso penthouse unit in a swanky condominium building in Makati City, according to a senior court official.

PALACE/A/12

Color of royalty better than 'tomato sauce' red

By Cathy Yamsuan

EXPECT THE senator-judges to wear robes of a darker shade of red—maroon, to be exact—when they convene as an impeachment court on Monday for the trial of Chief Justice Renato Corona.

Lawyer Valentina Cruz, the spokesperson of the impeachment court, said the new batch of robes was expected to arrive on Saturday, giving the Senate staff enough

COLOR/A/13

Economy last year not fun to many—Pulse

THE ECONOMY was no fun for many Filipinos last year.

About half of them believed that the economy stagnated, but more than a third said that it worsened, results of a Pulse Asia survey released yesterday showed.

"If you compare the state of the national economy now with that of last year [2010], would you say that the state of the national economy is better,

ECONOMY/A/11

ACROSS
Gov't, MILF panels tackle details of autonomy setup / A8

METRO
Court grants 3-day reprieve to Caloocan mayor / A20

BUSINESS
Share prices edge up close to record high / B1

WORLD
Anwar acquitted of sodomy, vows to win polls / A22

NEWS
China: Intrusion complaint by PH groundless / A2

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

6/7*

24	10	
26	3	
11	6	
6	7	4
8	1	3
2	6	0

SUERTRES*

FOUR DIGIT

1 9 7 8

MEGALOTTO 6/45

20 27 30 34 38 44

P4,500,000.00

6/55 GRAND LOTTO

11 26 28 43 46 47

P90,767,574.00

China: Intrusion charge groundless

BEIJING—China yesterday said accusations in navy recently entered Philippine waters were "groundless," as it warned Manila against causing disturbances in the disputed South China Sea (West Philippine Sea).

On Sunday, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs said it had conveyed "serious concerns" to the Chinese embassy in Manila over China's recent actions in the West Philippine Sea.

The DFA said two Chinese vessels and a navy ship were sighted in the vicinity of Recodo Shoal, which is about 113 kilometers (179 miles) off Palawan, on Dec. 11 and 12.

A Philippine military commander said they apparently came from a Chinese-occupied reef in the disputed Spratlys islands (Kalayaan) into Philippine waters.

"China will not accept the groundless accusations from the Philippine side," China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Weimin said yesterday.

"We hope the Philippines will not create something from nothing and cause disturbances."

Recodo is well within the Philippines' internationally recognized 200-mile maritime economic zone, but China claims all of the South China Sea, including the potentially oil-rich Spratlys islands.

Insisting that the Recodo (Subino) Shoal lay within its territory, China told the Philippines that it saw nothing wrong with the passage of three Chinese vessels near the coastline in the West Philippine Sea on Dec. 11 and 12, the DFA said yesterday.

Raul Hernandez, the DFA spokesperson, told the Inquirer that Bai Tian, charge d' affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Manila had "verbally said that Subino Shoal has a Chinese name and is within their (undisputed) jurisdiction."

PH sovereignty, jurisdiction

Hernandez would not say what the DFA planned to do next after it filed a diplomatic protest against the latest intrusion by Chinese ships into the Philippines' 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Citing reports from the Department of National Defense and Armed Forces of the Philippines, the DFA on Sunday said it had filed a formal protest with the Chinese embassy regarding the "sightings of two Chinese vessels and a People's Liberation Army ship in the vicinity of Recodo Shoal.

In a statement, Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario protested over that the "shoal" was "within Philippine sovereignty and maritime jurisdiction."

Del Rosario called the Chinese intrusions "clear violations of the 2002 Association of Southeast Asian Nations-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," or UNCLOS.

The DFA said that on Dec. 7-8 "unreported in (Bai Tian) its serious concern" over China's recent intrusions in the West Philippine Sea.

Increasing presence, activities

Last year, the Manila accused Beijing of "serious violations," following several aggressive acts by the disputed waters.

The diplomatic protests, the DFA cited the "increasing presence and activities of Chinese vessels" in the West Philippine Sea.

Beijing's actions "hamper the normal and legitimate fishing activities of Filipino fishermen in the area and undermine the peace and stability of the region," said the DFA.

The military had reported, among things, that PLA navy ships and a Chinese surveillance vessel were seen unloading building materials and erecting posts in the vicinity of Iroquois Reef and Amy Douglas Bank, or undersea hill off southwestern Palawan.

Both Iroquois Reef and Amy Douglas Bank are within the country's 200-mile EEZ.

The Chinese colonies has denied any incursions by its ships. But it acknowledged the presence in the disputed area of a "non-military research ship conducting maritime research activities" in the South China Sea.

AFP, AP and Jerry E. Esplanada

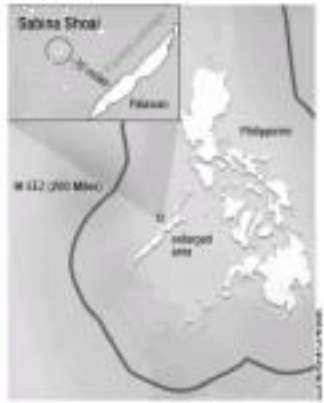

ILLUSTRATION shows the distance of Recodo Shoal from Palawan.

'itsmorefuninph' foreign, local personalities agree

By Abigail L. Ho

BVSH world-renowned feature writer and graphic novelist Neil Gaiman agrees with the government's new slogan that is a reality more keenly in the Philippines.

In a tweet posted on Jan. 6, when the "It's more fun in the Philippines" hashtag became one of the top trending topics on micro-blogging site Twitter, Gaiman said, "(This) #itsmorefuninthePhilippines hashtag is a true one. They applaud loudly and hug you a lot."

Gaiman, an stranger in the Philippines, having already been to the country thrice, has repeatedly posted on his blog how much he loves the Philippines, especially its people.

After his last visit to the country in March 2011, he related that while signing hundreds of books for avid fans left him "aching and tired," it also left him very "happy."

"I've never felt so loved. And never been so hugged," he said in a March 18, 2011, blog entry aptly titled "Hugged to death."

Gaiman is not the only non-Filipino discovering the country with praise and relenting to the sweep of the Department of Tourism's new campaign slogan that is by indeed more fun here.

Former United Nations ambassador to Manila Kristie Kenney constantly tweets about missing the Philippines and her Filipino friends. Asked about her most fun-filled experience in the Philippines, she tweeted, "Snorkeling in crystal clear waters with Pinoy pals."

Now the US envoy to Thailand, she still gets regular tweets from Filipino friends telling her how much she is missed here.

The new tourism slogan has also gotten the attention of Filipino personalities in various industries both here and abroad.

BBC News anchor Rico Hizon highlighted the Filipinos' penchant for the Web, saying how "Tweeting, Facebooking, Googling, Gmailing, Yahooing" were more fun in the Philippines, and then inviting people in "(not our beautiful 7,107 islands) how we might now?"

Make-up artist Jigo Mayuga said it was more fun in the Philippines because of the "buns, fishball, lomi& lanok," while actor Ping Medina compared Singapore's $5-beer with the Philippines' less than $1-a-bottle cost.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte tweeted that the Philippines was the only country in the world where the 1990s dance tune "Never Gonna Give You Up" reminded people more of actor Rodrigo Duterte than its singer, Rick Astley.

A tweet from the official account of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority said it was more fun in the Philippines because of the Filipinos' use of "bahlan to get traffic and flood updates."

MMDA traffic czar Tom Gonzales said losing a bag containing P30,000 to cash in the Philippines stunted having it returned, intact, by an honest MMDA constable.

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. anchor Bernadette Sembrano probably best captured the essence of having more fun in the Philippines when she said, "It is the only place where victims who had just lost their homes were at the camera and post!"

Militants say there's basis to charge GMA with plunder

By Leila B. Salaverria

MILITANTS yesterday said former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo could be charged with plunder based on the testimony of former Commission on Elections (Comelec) chairman Benjamin Abalos that she and Mrs. Arroyo's lawmaker husband confirmed to him the delivery of $50 million following the signing of the National Broadband Network deal with China.

This after Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Teddy Casiño, Gabriela's Liza Maza and Bagong Alyansang Makabayan's Carol Arellano, who filed a partial motion for reconsideration yesterday asking the Office of the Ombudsman to charge Arroyo with plunder and additional counts of graft.

Arroyo was charged with two counts of graft and one count of violation of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials for allegedly approving the NBN deal with China's ZTE Corp. despite knowing the transaction was ripe with irregularities.

Also charged with one count of graft were former first gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, former elections chief Benjamin Abalos and former Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza.

The NBN-ZTE deal was eventually canceled by Arroyo amid allegations of bribery and overpricing.

In their motion, the militants were also seeking the inclusion of Jose Miguel Arroyo, Abalos and Mendoza in the plunder case.

Casiño, Maza and Arellano were the complainants in the earlier charges against Arroyo, Abalos and Mendoza that the Ombudsman filed before the Sandiganbayan.

But the Ombudsman had dismissed their plunder complaint on the ground that the testimonies of witnesses in the Senate inquiries had failed to prove that money had changed hands.

In their motion, the complainants insisted that there were sufficient grounds to file a nonbailable plunder case against the Arroyos, Abalos and Mendoza.

"The testimony of Senate (hearings) alone clearly establishes the fact that (money indeed changed hands during the signing of the NBN-ZTE contract," they said.

According to them, Biazon's testimony showed he had personal knowledge that the former President received kickbacks during the signing of the contract, since Arroyo conditioned to him the delivery of $50 million.

They also called attention to Biazon's testimony that Arroyo came to China to witness the signing of the contract because the Chinese would not shell out any more funds unless the President approved it. Records, and his testimony that the $50 million was allocated for campaign expenses for the 2007 senatorial and local elections.

The complainants also said that the $50 million was different from the $41 million received by the "Filipino group" as witnesses before the contract was signed. According to Biazon's testimony, it was businessman Leo San Miguel who delivered Mendoza's share of the alleged payment.

I'm sticking with minority bloc, says Lagman

By Cynthia D. Balana and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

MANILA, 2nd Ist Chamba

Minority Leader and Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman yesterday dismissed speculation that he was joining the majority coalition after with the ongoing turncoatism in the minority bloc in the House of Representatives.

"I am not applying with the majority and I am not betting the minority for membership in the majority," Lagman told the Inquirer.

He said he was determined to continue providing the minority with a "competent, credible and conscientious ownership," and was prepared to prove that he had the machinery of an "absolute majority" in the minority bloc when sessions resume on Jan. 31.

Lagman thanked Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales II and ranking members of the Liberal Party like Mardiscading Min Quirino and Bantayan Rep. Eric Franchise for saying he was welcome in the administration coalition should he decide to leave the minority.

Lagman said he still had overriding policy differences with the administration, some of which were pending in the Supreme Court.

"I cannot forsake conscience and conviction in favor of partisan considerations and convenience," Lagman said.

Lagman is locked in a battle for the House minority leadership with Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez who challenged Lagman's continued hold on the post despite what the latter claimed was a "term-sharing" agreement they forged in July 2008.

But Lagman's detractors drove more such an agreement.

Lagman also said that an "absolute majority" in the minority actually affixed their signatures on a manifesto in December 2010 expressing their desire that he continue as minority leader.

Orders of GMA

He accused Suarez of plotting his course, supposedly on orders of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, now a representative of Pampanga.

Suarez said the manifesto that the Albay congressman was referring to was only in recognition of Lagman's successful reelection as chief of the minority bloc but it did not give him the privileges and authority to extend his term beyond what was agreed upon.

He insisted he had the support of 19 of 29 minority members who wanted Lagman to honor the term-sharing agreement and turn over the post of House minority leader.

"I am sure a power grabber I will not seek something which does not rightfully belong to me. We just have to honor what had been agreed upon," Suarez said.

'Bound to happen'

Reacting to the squabble in the minority, Budget Secretary Florencio Abad Jr. said it was bound to happen considering the string of charges filed against Arroyo and her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo.

"It creates an opportunity for a legitimate and credible opposition to emerge," said Abad.

The opposition is doomed if it will be in fortunes on the "discredited and deadweight" former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, said Abad, a Liberal Party stalwart, who cheered efforts by the remnants of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats led by Lagman to reunite itself away from Arroyo.

"It can go either way. If one pushes the opposition, the minority can begin to define itself philosophically distinct or even opposed to the ideas and proposition that dominated the Arroyo administration, or in another, where the opposition continues to hitch its wagon to the fate of the discredited and deadweight Arroyo," said Abad.

Lagman had declared that the minority bloc was now represented by Lakas-CMD and not by Lakas-Kampi after most members of Kampi, the original political party of Arroyo, abandoned the merged entity to form the National Unity Party last year.

FVR confirms split

In Lingayen, Pangasinan, former President Fidel V. Ramos, founder of Lakas-CMD, yesterday confirmed Lagman's pronouncements that the ex-Speaker between Lakas-CMD and Kampi had ceased to exist.

He said the merger in 2009 had not prospered "when it became one person's party."

"I said that three years ago, when the bigger Lakas was supposed to be merged [with Kampi] on orders of somebody," Ramos told reporters here on the sidelines of the 65th anniversary of the Lingayen Gulf landings.

Ramos said he rejected the Lakas-Kampi merger in 2009. With reports from Kathrice Carvallosa and Fharanel Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon, and Tonyo Cruz, Inquirer General Luzon

Expect lower power bills this month—Meralco

By Amy R. Remo

CUSTOMERS of power distributor Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) can look forward to a reduction in their electricity bills this month after the generation charge fell by 5 centavos per kilowatt-hour to P5.46 per kWh.

Households consuming 200 kWh a month can expect a decrease of P5 in their electricity bills, while those that use 200 kWh a month will enjoy a P10 reduction for January. Households that consume 300 kWh and 400 kWh monthly can also expect decreases of P15 and P20, respectively.

Meralco attributed the decline to the reduction in the price of electricity purchased from the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM).

"WESM prices fell by 35.81 per kWh, or P 7.14 per kWh in the December supply month from P9 per kWh in November," the power utility said.

Meralco explained that spot market prices gradually declined after the power supply situation in Luzon normalized. It will be recalled that the Luzon grid experienced generation capacity constraints in late October last year due to the successive shutdowns of the Malampaya natural gas pipeline, which supplies three power facilities generating a combined 1,788 megawatts.

Total energy consumption also went down slightly due to cooler temperatures in December, Meralco added.

Meralco said that the reduction in WESM prices had offset the slightly higher prices from the independent power producers (IPPs), whose prices went up by an average of 1.3 centavos. This can be attributed to the decrease in the electricity output of the IPPs to 59.1 percent in December from a high of 71.3 percent in November.

Meralco currently sources power from three IPPs namely, Quezon, Power Philippines Ltd.'s coal-fired facility and the 1,000-megawatt Sta. Rita and the 500-MW San Lorenzo natural gas-fired power plants, both owned by the Lopez-led First Gen Holdings.

Meanwhile, the price of electricity sourced from state-run National Power Corp. (Napocor) has remained stable.

The distribution utility said it procured 12 percent of its electricity last month from the WESM, 42 percent from IPPs, and 46 percent from Napocor. The rates will be reflected in the January electricity bills.

BDO gifts OFWs with cash prizes at Pamaskong Salubong

BDO Unibank, Inc. teamed up with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) in giving major prizes to deserving OFWs during the Vice Presidential Pamaskong Salubong held last December 23 at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1.

Pamaskong Salubong is an annual event spearheaded by OWWA to bestow priority treatment to OFWs going home for the holidays. They were given special lanes at the airport arrival area, priority processing and giveaways.

OWWA Admin. Carmelita Dimzon, VP Jaime Biray, BDO Remittance Distribution FVP and Div. Hd. Lourdes Reyes, CEO-Director of Fund and Investment Office Jesse OFWs arrival to honor them with a grand salubong.

Gerrie Gloria, BDO Remittance Distribution FVP distributes P50,000 gifts to balikbayans going home for the holidays. They were given special lanes at the airport arrival area, priority processing and giveaways.

The OFWs were greeted by Vice President Jaime Biray with the assistance of OWWA Admin. Carmelita Dimzon, BDO Remittance Distribution First Vice President Gerrie Gloria also welcomed balikbayans with special tokens from BDO.

Every year, commendable OFWs are chosen by OWWA to receive special prizes from its sponsors in recognition of the significant economic contribution of Filipino workers abroad through their remittance.

Together with Biray and Dimzon, Gloria presented a BDO Kabayan Savings passbook with P50,000 cash to each of this year's grand prize winners: Michelle Eanpilin, a secretary working in Qatar; Joel Matthew Duenas, a senior medical technologist in Saudi Arabia; and Ernesto Andres, Jr., an electrical technician in Saudi Arabia. They also received SM Gift Passes from SM Supermalls worth P15,000 each.

OFWs from Saudi Arabia welcomed by VP Jaime Biray, OWWA Admin. Carmelita Dimzon, BDO Remittance Distribution First Vice President Gerrie Gloria, & Ruben Gonzales, Group Brand Manager of SM Supermalls Global Pinoy Center.

Andres, who returned to the Philippines to get married in January, thanked the sponsors for the cash, which he considered a big help for the wedding, while Duenas, an existing BDO Kabayan Savings account holder, uses the account to pay loans for the retirement home he bought in Pangasinan.

BDO Kabayan Savings, an account designed solely for the remittance and savings needs of OFW families, enables OFWs to send remittances to their families in the Philippines through their account, and allows them to set aside a portion of the remittance for savings.

VP Jaime Biray and OWWA Admin. Dimzon greet returning OFW passengers at the NAIA Terminal 1.

Shown in photo from left: Rose Tendenza (BDO Remittance Pre-Departure Orientation Service Head), Joel Matthew Duenas with family (OFW winner of cash prize from BDO), Gerrie Gloria (BDO Remittance Distribution First Vice President), Michelle Eanpilin (Filipina OFW in Qatar OFW winner), & Ernesto Andres Jr. (BDO Remittance Grand Winner)

'Obama call vs outsourcing a reelection ploy'

By Jerome Aning

BOSLE Filipino lawmakers are worried about the implications of US President Barack Obama's call for an end to the outsourcing of American jobs, a local militant labor group screaming said the call is supposed to be a reelection ploy.

In a statement, Bilisang Mayo Uno (BMU) said public pronouncements made to bear on the Obama administration in view of the recent unemployment in the United States.

"The American workers and people are clamoring for immediate relief from the suffering caused by the severe economic crisis gripping the world. Obama was forced to call for an end to outsourcing to boost his chances of getting reelected this year," said BMU secretary general Sonny Matula.

The was the reason for KMU "seriously doubted" Obama's sincerity in calling for an end to the outsourcing of US jobs to countries like the Philippines and India, he said.

Meanwhile, meanwhile, was keeping mum for now on the call made by the US President.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte said yesterday the Palace would leave it in the Department of foreign affairs to comment.

"We would not like to say more at this point," she said.

She said Obama's statement was "reserved to them."

"Obama has recently supported outsourcing because it is profitable for big US capitalists who want to boost profits by exploiting cheap and oppressed labor in countries like the Philippines," Arenas said.

The KMU chief, however, said that whether or not the US Congress follows through on Obama's call with the signing of prime legislation, the "outsourcing" that greeted his pronouncement in the Philippines should be a "wake up call" for Filipinos.

"We have to move beyond a crisis-wracked economy dominated by the US. We have to stop relying on the US, or any other country for that matter, to create jobs in the country. We have to stop pursuing destructive policies and programs that workers' rights in order to entice foreign investors to come to the country," Bobola said.

He said that while the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry provided the country with high tax revenues, it did not address the real needs of the Filipino workers and people.

"While call center employees enjoy higher salaries than other workers in the country, they are ostensibly employed and subjected to highly-stressful work conditions that damage their health," he said.

"We have to create decent jobs by implementing a program of genuine land reform and national industrialization. We have to create jobs not by offering cheap and repressed labor to foreign investors but by providing for the basic needs of our people," Arenas added.

Senate Majority Leader Ralph Recto said the government should avoid a trilling group in the US to cry and sing the passage of the bill. Officials would also begin to look for other BPO markets, he added.

Outsourcing firms with roughly 800,000 call center agents contribute close to $9 billion a year to the economy. This is close to half of the $19 billion in annual remittances from some 10 million overseas Filipino workers. With a report from Christine O. Avendaño

Ampatuan lawyer nixes witnesses

By Jule M. Aurelio

A LAWYER of the Ampatuans in the Maguindanao massacre case wants to defer the presentation of two prosecution witnesses, saying that they were not on the court-approved list of evidence and witnesses for the trial.

Lawyer Philip Sigfrid Kotun questioned the government's plans to present Genalina Ogarado, sister of victim and lawyer Cristina Ogarado, and a forensic expert from the National Bureau of Investigation.

Kotun represents Andal Ampatuan Jr. and his father, Andal Sr., the alleged masterminds of the Nov. 23, 2009, Maguindanao massacre. They are among the 196 accused who are facing 57 counts of murder for the gruesome killing of 57 people, including 32 journalists.

In a two-page court motion, the lawyer asked for an official ruling from Judge Jocelyn Solis-Reyes of Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 221 regarding the "additional witnesses."

During a hearing on Jan. 5, state prosecutor Jesse Mendiola announced in open court that the two witnesses would be presented to the resumption of the hearing on Jan. 11.

The hearing will be held at the Branch 221 courtroom in Quezon City and not at Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City.

He further said that Ogarado and the NBI forensic expert were on the pretrial order issued on Sept. 30, 2010, after the pretrial conference was concluded.

He argued that the presentation of new collected witnesses violated a Supreme Court memorandum on the matter and "provides an unfair maneuver to keep adding new witnesses after pretrial despite the rigorous efforts to have a full disclosure case and evidence at the inception of trial."

The defense lawyer warned that this would open "the floodgates to harassing, manufactured and contrived testimonies."

Aside from an official court ruling on the additional witnesses, the defense also compels to call for the presentation of the two witnesses until their urgent motion runs resolved.

Kotun noted the prosecution's alleged "inability" to list all its witnesses even if the case was filed back in 2009.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday - January 10, 2012
1st Week in Ordinary Time
1 Sm 1:9-20 / 1 Jn 5:1-9 / Mk 1:21-28

After they had eaten and drank in Shiloh, Hannah stood up; see the Sam Eli, the priest, his seat was beside the doorpost of Yahweh's house. To angry statement she wept and prayed to Yahweh and made this vow: "O Yahweh of hosts, if only you will have compassion on your maidservant and take me note, I will put him in your service for as long as he lives and no razor shall touch his head."

As she prayed before Yahweh, Eli observed the movement of her lips. Hannah was praying silently; she moved her lips but was not heard a sound. So Eli thought she was drunk. He therefore said to her: "For how long will you be drunk? Get your drunkenness gone." But Hannah answered: "No, my lord, I am a woman in great distress, not drunk. I have not drunk wine or strong drink, but I am pouring out my soul before Yahweh. Do not take me for a bad woman. I was so afflicted that my prayer flowed continuously." Then Eli said: "Go in peace and may the God of Israel grant you what you asked her." Hannah answered, "Let your maidservant deserve your kindness." Then she left the temple and after she was an older, she seemed a different woman.

Elkanah rose early in the morning and worshiped before Yahweh with his wives. Then they went back home to Ramah. When Elkanah slept with his wife, Hannah, Yahweh took compassion on her, and she became pregnant. She gave birth to a son and called him Samuel because she said: "I have asked Yahweh to give him to me."

Gospel: Mark 1:21-28

Jesus and his disciples went into the town of Capernaum and began to teach in the synagogue during the sabbath assemblies. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he spoke as one having authority and not like the teachers of the Law.

It happened that a man with an evil spirit was in their synagogue and he shouted, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: You are the Holy One of God." Then Jesus faced him and said with authority: "Be silent and come out of this man!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and, with a loud shriek, came out of him.

All the people were astonished and they wondered, "What is this? With what power and authority he gives orders to the evil spirits and they obey him!" And their fame spread throughout all the country of Galilee.

Ombudsman exec seeks new probe of perjury case

By Lisa B. Salaverria

FORMER Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito Gervasio yesterday contested the perjury charges filed against him for allegedly failing to declare a house in Davao City in his statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN) in 2003 and asked the Sandiganbayan to order a reinvestigation of the case.

Gervasio also asked for the deferment of the issuance of arrest while his motion was being resolved.

In charging Gervasio with perjury the Office of the Ombudsman said he did not declare the Davao home in his 2003 SALN, even though it was supposedly built in 1999. The house was included in his 2004 SALN.

The case stemmed from a complaint alleging that Gervasio had bought a piece of land in Davao City and erected a building on it using bank loans.

In his motion filed before the Sandiganbayan Second Division, Gervasio said the Ombudsman was supposed to resolve the motion for alleged failure to declare the lot in Davao City in his SALN, but it went on to order him for failing to declare his residential house.

Gervasio said he had submitted to ownership of the lot, and there was no issue about that. But he said there was no proof that he carried any improvements on the property, or that one had been built on it.

He said the list of buildings and the building permit supposedly showing that he owned the three-story residential building in Davao City did not prove that he owned the building prior to 2003.

He noted that before the Ombudsman required Gervasio, he was not shown this list of buildings found by the graft investigators.

"The accused was never given the opportunity to explain his side regarding the aforementioned documents and the surrounding circumstances thereof. This is a denial of due process," he said, adding that had he been given the chance to explain, he "would not have been filed in the first place."

Gervasio also said there was no probable cause based on the preliminary investigation conducted, because there was no evidence to show that he owned the building before 2003.

He also argued that he was not given a chance to submit his SALN.

The case is not the under the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, the Ombudsman should inform the employee reporting his SALN that it was not properly filed, and should direct him to correct it.

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Republic of the Philippines
Office of the President
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MUSLIM FILIPINOS

RESOLUTION NO. 46, SERIES OF 2011

A Resolution Approving the Criteria and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Halal CertificationBodies/ Entities in the Philippines

WHEREAS, Section 8, Article II of Republic Act No. 9997 mandates the NCMF to promote and develop the Philippine Halal Industry and accredit halal certifying entities/bodies for the utmost benefit of Muslim Filipinos and in partnership in cooperation with appropriate agencies, individuals and institutions here and abroad;

WHEREAS, the NCMF created the Philippine Halal Development and Accreditation Board, or the Philippine Halal Board for brevity, to pursue the foregoing mandate;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Halal Board drafted a set of criteria and guidelines for the accreditation of Halal certification bodies/ entities in the Philippines, which was attuned with existing international guidelines, to ensure that only qualified and competent certification/evaluator entities are accredited, thereby lending credibility and competitiveness to Philippine Halal certified products both in the local and international markets;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Halal Board has conducted a series of multi-sectoral consultative fora to generate inputs from concerned stakeholders regarding the aforementioned draft;

WHEREAS, the final draft of the said criteria and guidelines in which the inputs of concerned stakeholders have been incorporated was submitted to the Commission for comments and approval;

WHEREFORE, upon the motion of Commissioner Mussolini and duly seconded by the rest of the Commissioners, it is hereby RESOLVED as it hereby RESOLVED by the Commission en banc, without prejudice to future amendments which the need arises, to APPROVE the following Criteria and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Halal Certification Bodies/Entities in the Philippines:

Section 1
LEGAL MANDATE

Article II Section 8, paragraph B.1 of Republic Act No. 9997 mandates the NCMF to "promote and develop the Philippine Halal Industry and accredit halal certifying entities/bodies for the utmost benefit of Muslim Filipinos and in partnership in cooperation with appropriate agencies, individuals and institutions here and abroad"

Section 2
DEFINITION OF TERMS

a) *Accreditation* – is the procedure by which a government agency having jurisdiction formally recognizes the competence of an inspection and/or certification body to provide inspection and certification services (Codex Alimentarius).
b) *Audit*- is a systematic and functionally independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned objectives (Codex Alimentarius)
c) *Certification* – is the procedure by which official certification bodies and officially recognized bodies provide written or equivalent assurance that foods and non-food to control systems for food and non-food conforms to requirements. (Codex Alimentarius for food products)
d) *Common Halal Logo* – refers to the common logo sanctioned by the NCMF and to be adopted by certification body or entity that shall be printed on the cover or package of Halal certified products.
e) *Council of Ulama* – refers to a group of Muslim religious scholars within the certification body/ entity.
f) *Halal* – refers to lawful food and non-food products as anything that is allowed for consumption or use by Muslims as permitted by the Shari'ah or Islamic law.
g) *Halal Certificate* – is a document issued by a certification body to a qualified company or manufacturer that produces certain Halal products.
h) *Inspection* – is the examination of food and non-food or systems for control of food and non-food, raw materials, processing and distribution, including in process and finished product testing, in order to verify that they conform to requirements in accordance with Codex Alimentarius for food products).
i) *Philippine National Halal Standard* refers to a set of Halal standards approved by local citizens and adopted and promulgated by the NCMF in coordination and consultation with concerned agencies of the government.
j) *Philippine Halal Development and Promotion Board*- is a body created by the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos to pursue its mandate on Halal.
k) *Shari'ah* – refers to the primary source of Islamic law and jurisprudence.
l) *Unified Halal Certification Scheme* – refers to the common certification criteria and guidelines that should be adopted for applied by certification bodies/ entities in issuing Halal certificates to qualified companies or manufacturers.

Section 3
SCOPE

These Criteria and Guidelines cover both local and foreign bodies/entities that seek to certify Philippine products, whether food or non-food, as Halal for commercial purposes.

Section 4
QUALIFICATIONS

The body or entity applying for accreditation must:

a) be a Muslim organization duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or any appropriate agency of the government;
b) have specific objective of engaging in Halal certification as in Constitution and By-Laws ;
c) have at least one (1) Shari'ah expert or a Council of Ulama as its active membership, who is directly involved in the conducting of the actual inspection whether a certain product is Halal or not;
d) have a signatory to the Halal certificates who is a reputable alumnus who possesses a degree in Shari'ah Law;
e) have Philippine-grown record in Halal control or any commercial regulatory agencies of the government.
f) have an existing office with necessary manpower complement and equipment and facilities as well as an operating organizational structure;
g) have Muslim food technologists, microbiologists, chemists either as regular members or consultants;
h) have personnel who have formal training on Halal monitoring and inspection;
i) have a Halal laboratory or access to government-recognized Halal laboratories that is evidenced by an existing and valid agreement, e.g. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA);
j) have an existing guidelines and procedures on certification of Halal food and non-food products that generally conforms with the unified Halal Certification Scheme;
k) comply with other requirements as may be required by the Halal Board.

Section 5
DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The accredited Halal certification body/entity must shall:

a) conform with the approved Philippine Halal Standards;
b) adopt the unified Halal Certification Scheme;
c) be responsible in declaring the Halalness of products being certified Halal;
d) issue Halal Certificates to qualified companies or manufacturers;
e) adopt the common Philippine Halal Logo;
f) allow designated officials and/or technical staff of the NCMF and its partner agencies to conduct audit on its operations, particularly on Halal Certification/Monitoring System on unannounced yet reasonable schedules;
g) implement its own monitoring systems and procedures to ensure Halal compliance by companies or manufacturers that were issued Halal certificates, thereby ensuring integrity of the Halal-certified products;
h) submit quarterly and updated report on the status of Halal products it has certified as well as monitoring report on companies/processing plants or areas and abattoirs;
i) immediately inform the NCMF on any change in the organization such as personnel, structure, or operation procedures;
j) immediately inform the NCMF on any operational or physical change in the plant or company that it has issued a Halal certificate;
k) inform manufacturers that NCMF teams and/or partner agencies will conduct follow-through audit emphasis and/or verification visits on producing or manufacturing Halal products as certified by the Body/entity;
l) allow designated audit teams from the NCMF and its partner agencies to conduct random sampling, analysis and laboratory testing of Halal certified products in the market as certified by the body/entity for revalidation of the behavior of the products;

Section 6
GROUNDS FOR SUSPENSION

The accreditation of Halal certification body/entity may be suspended for a minimum period of three (3) months to a maximum period of one (1) year depending on the degree of violation:

a) Failure of the certification body in monitoring the Halal status or Halal compliance of processing plants in areas and abattoirs;
b) Failure of the certification body to submit quarterly updated reports on the monitoring and inspection activities of the concerned plants or areas and abattoirs.

Section 7
GROUNDS FOR REVOCATION

The accreditation of Halal certification body/entity shall be revoked or on the following grounds:

a) The certification body/entity loses its legal status by law;
b) Revocation of its registration with concerned regulatory agency/ies of the government, i.e. SEC;
c) Deliberate violation of the foregoing accreditation criteria and guidelines;
d) Resignation or total absence of its ulama members and Muslim scientists;
e) Continued violation of grounds for suspension by the maximum one-year suspension period.

Note: If the grounds for revocation of accreditation exists in only the case of one Halal certification body/ entity that is apply for accreditation

Section 8
DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS

The certification body/entity shall apply directly to the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) Halal Board Secretariat using the prescribed form and enclosed the following documents:

a) Halal certification body/entity's profile;
b) Security and Exchange Commission Certificate of Registration and Constitution and By-Laws;
c) Other services and social activities of the certification body/entity;
d) Record of current and past Halal certification and monitoring activities, for body/entity that was previously engaged in Halal certification);
e) List and qualification of officials, personnel/employees working as staff support service and/or Halal inspectors;
f) Example of Halal certificates and logo used by the certification body/entity.

Section 9
ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING

a) An Application Form together with other pertinent documents shall be received at least two (2) weeks before the date of actual audit on the office and operations of the body/entity seeking accreditation.
b) Application will be initially evaluated by the Evaluation Committee of the Halal Board that shall make appropriate recommendation to the Halal Board;
c) If documents are found to be in order, a team of Halal Board evaluators and auditors will be sent to the operating office of the certifying body/entity.
d) The Halal Board's technical will notify the certification body/entity, as the schedule of the inspection.
e) The inspection team shall prepare a report and recommendation to the NCMF Halal Board; and
f) The Halal Board shall recommend to the Commission the qualified applicant.
g) Incomplete application requirements will not be processed.

Section 10
APPROVAL / DISAPPROVAL

a) The NCMF Commission en banc shall be the final approving body and shall issue an Accreditation Certificate or License to the certification body/entity whose application shall have been approved;
b) The NCMF Halal Board will inform the concerned body/entity through written advice its application for accreditation was approved or otherwise;
c) The Halal Board will issue an Accreditation Certificate or License to the certification body/entity whose application shall have been approved;
d) The validity of the Certificate or License is two (2) years, without prejudice to suspension or revocation upon deliberate violation of certain rules and regulations of the accreditation criteria and guidelines.

Section 11
MONITORING

a) The Halal Board and/or its deputized partner agencies shall monitor Halal compliance of manufacturing or processing plant, areas or abattoirs;
b) The Halal auditors shall monitor the activities of Halal certification bodies/entities;
c) The Halal Board and/or its deputized partner agencies shall coordinate with other government agencies in monitoring compliance by concerned manufacturing companies of the Philippine National Halal Standard;
d) The Halal Board and/or its deputized partner agencies shall conduct random inspection of the processing plants and facilities of companies with Halal certified products.
e) The Halal Board and/or its deputized partner agencies shall monitor the Halal compliance of storage facilities, warehouses, cold storages of supermarkets and groceries, transportation and handling of Halal products and other similar conditions or procedures;
f) The Halal Board and/or its deputized partner agencies shall conduct random testing and analysis of newly certified Halal products for authentication purposes;
g) The Halal Board and/or its deputized partner agencies shall monitor the Halal compliance of duly recognized or accredited laboratories;
h) The Halal Board and/or its deputized partner agencies shall monitor the Halal compliance on labeling of certified Halal products;

Section 12
RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION

a) The NCMF Halal Board will notify the certification body/entity two (2) months before the expiration of accreditation certificate or license;
b) The certification body/entity shall submit application for renewal together with other pertinent documents at least one (1) month before the date of expiration of the accreditation certificate;
c) The certification body/entity will again undergo the processes and stages of assessment, screening, evaluation, approval;
d) Failure of a certify/accredited body/entity to renew accreditation will subject it to a surcharge that shall be determined by the NCMF Halal Board.

Section 13
FEES AND CHARGES

An amount of Thirty Thousand Pesos (Php 30,000) shall be charged against the body/entity whose application for accreditation shall have been approved. The body/entity seeking accreditation shall also be responsible for the cost of audit on its office and actual operations that shall be incurred by the Audit Team of the Halal Board. The cost shall particularly cover transportation, either by air or land or both and the food and accommodation of the said Audit Team that shall be composed of not less than one (1) but not more than four (4) personnel. The cost of renewal of accreditation shall be Ten Thousand Pesos (PhP10,000.00) every yearly up to five consecutive years. Thereafter, payment for accreditation shall be made after every three years. All fees and charges to be collected shall be deducted subject to existing accounting and auditing rules and regulations.

Section 14
PHILIPPINE HALAL LOGO

The Philippine Halal Logo as illustrated below must be consistently adopted by all accredited Halal certification bodies/entities. It shall be printed on every Halal certified product with the acronym of the concerned certification body/entity printed beneath the logo.

Legend:

The Sun Rays – represent the eight (8) rays of the sun in the Philippine Flag.
The Three Stars – represent the three main islands of the Philippines namely, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.
The Arabic Text means Halal.
The letters – symbolize pleasing in basic sources of Halal foods.

APPROVED and DONE this 30th day of December 2011, Quezon City, Philippines.

(SGD.)
HON. BALINDER D. BUSALAN, LL.D, M.N.S
Secretary/Presiding Officer

(Sgd.) **HON. SHARIF ELI A. ABUBAKAR** Commissioner		(Sgd.) **HON. ALLADIN I. AMPATUAN** Commissioner
(Sgd.) **HON. MONSUR M. HALUNAGO** Commissioner	(Sgd.) **HON. RADIA B. MACALINGCO** Commissioner	(Sgd.) **HON. ERLINDA T. RAMIREZ** Commissioner
(Sgd.) **HON. HATTORI E. RASSAN** Commissioner		(Sgd.) **HON. MALAHAYA C. MUTIA** Commissioner

(Attested by:)

(Sgd.)
HON. MUTAWAKIL T. MANAMAN
Executive Director

N.B.: Interested bodies/entities may now file their application for accreditation addressed to:

Philippine Halal Development and Accreditation Board
National Commission on Muslim Filipinos
39 Sorbet Annex Bldg., Commonwealth Ave., Brgy. Holy Spirit
Quezon City

Also, companies and manufacturers whose Halal certified products bear the logo of the abolished Office on Muslim Affairs (OMA) are advised to immediately coordinate with the NCMF or their appropriate issuing of Halal certified products may be properly applied. The NCMF shall not at any time authorize any entity or individual, use any of its employees and officials to use the OMA logo on Halal certified products. For Republic Act No. 9997, all functions, programs, assets, and liabilities of the abolished OMA have been absorbed by the NCMF.

OFWs worldwide to protest hike in health premiums

By Jerome Aning

AN OVERSEAS Filipino workers (OFWs) group based in the Middle East yesterday said it would lead a worldwide drive to oppose the 150-percent increase in Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) premiums this year.

Migrante Middle East described the rate hike, from the current P600 to P2,400 beginning July, as an "unhealthy money-making scheme" which "will only burden our already overburdened OFWs and their dependents."

The PhilHealth board last month issued a circular imposing an increase in OFWs' health premiums.

"The hike in premiums will not only be forced on OFWs—by it will push our bleed-leading to death due to deprivation of free and affordable medical services," The government, through various agencies, is killing us not softly by imposing additional fees on the process of better social services," said John Leonard Monterona, Migrante Mideast regional director, in an e-mail from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he is based.

Signature drive

Migrante Mideast has started a signature drive against the rate hike. An online version (http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/no-to-philhealth-premium-increase-ofw-p-circular) has been uploaded to reach out to more OFWs and their families.

The petition, which targets one million signatures by July 2012, would be forwarded to President Aquino and the PhilHealth board, along with various OFW groups' position papers.

Monterona said Migrante chapters in the Asia Pacific, Australia, North America and Europe were staging a coordinated campaign against the premium increase.

Monterona said Migrante and other OFW groups would launch other campaigns and might even file a case in court to oppose the PhilHealth order.

Act prohibits fee increases

He pointed out that Republic Act No. 10022, or the Amended Migrant Workers Act of 2008, prohibits increases in government fees for services rendered to OFWs and their dependents.

"Besides, there were no consultations with OFW groups conducted by the PhilHealth board so they can't impose it unilaterally without a proper dialogue with the stakeholders—the OFWs and their families," Monterona added.

Monterona recalled that in 2005, the Arroyo administration subsidized the premium of P636 million from the OFW Medicare program of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, so PhilHealth supposedly without a proper consultation and dialogue with OFWs.

ARMM, DENR ink reforestation pact

By Kristine L. Alave

IN THE aftermath of Tropical Storm "Sendong," the national government and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have agreed to reforest some 2,500 hectares of denuded land in the ARMM, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has announced.

Environment Secretary Ramon Paje and ARMM OIC Mujib Hataman yesterday signed an agreement to reforest 2,500 hectares under the National Greening Program. The project, with a budget of just under P80 million, is the first joint undertaking between the national government and the ARMM since Hataman assumed the post of officer in charge last month.

P48.6M assistance package

Paje said the P48.6-million assistance package should help the ARMM carry out a massive tree planting program in its five provinces—Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

"This collaboration sets a critical milestone in ecological governance for the region and bodes well for addressing the social and economic challenges the region undoubtedly faces," Paje said.

Paje noted that the forests of the ARMM had become a source of timber for illegal loggers. The Bureau of Customs intercepted 1,890 cubic feet of illegally cut lumber in Zamboanga City in December last year.

Hataman said the agreement with the DENR would

Across the NATION

Gov't, MILF panels tackle details of autonomy setup

By Ryan D. Rosauro
Inquirer Mindanao

ILIGAN CITY—Peace negotiators of the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) appear to be in agreement that a future Bangsamoro self-governance entity must essentially be "genuinely autonomous" of the central government.

"We know we share with you this vision and that much of what we need to discuss would be how to get there and how this new political reconfiguration would look like," chief government negotiator Miriam Coronel said in a statement during opening rites of the 24th exploratory talks in Iligan Congress.

"There is no doubt that the entire Republic of the Philippines will benefit from a region for Bangsamoro people that is not only genuinely autonomous but also one where the principles of good and effective governance is in place," Lorenzo said.

He said the autonomous government for the Bangsamoro people must be "democratically elected in free, clean and honest elections administered by security forces that are neutral from political interests and celebrated and monitored by the international community."

Under a democratic setup, he said, "elected ministries provide the mandate and ensure that we truly have a fighting chance of achieving the governed to actively participate and hold our leaders to account."

Lorenzo said genuine autonomy must not impede the need for "a close working relationship with the national government in key aspects."

"National government is relevant. This can be clearly seen even in the document of the MILF-the proposed Bangsamoro Comprehensive Compact," he noted.

Working relations

Lorenzo disclosed that defining this working relationship between a future autonomous region and the national government "takes precedence over everything else."

"It is also there that we see how autonomous relationship should include the equitable sharing of wealth and the generation of revenues to make the autonomous government credible in producing opportunities for its people in its environment," he added, in a statement as well as allow the national government to provide the kind of assistance that should be requested for," he pointed out.

Lorenzo urged the MILF to share the government's desire "of crafting an agreement soonenough..."

"In our reckoning, the golden opportunity to craft such an agreement in this first quarter of this year," he stressed.

"Our standing instructions from our President are to work earnestly and with due and deliberate dispatch earnest to consult all concerned stakeholders after important along the way," he added.

Lorenzo said that if the parties come to agreement and begin implementing its provisions sooner, the ceasefire political solution to the Moro conflict could roll to "increased normalcy" throughout the rest of the island Peninsula."

During the opening rites, Lorenzo introduced two new negotiate members of the government panel—Dr. Hamid Barra, former president of the Mindanao Islamic Council, and peace activist Yasmin Busran-Lao.

Iqbal, who used to be panel chairman, replaced Marvic Leonen, who became an alternate member, while Lao completes the five-member panel.

EDIT A.P.PADACH Residents pour water to subdue the small fire sparkled across Purok-an town in Compostela Valley. AFP

Landslide also buries sisters' hope

By Gerardina Licorto
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—Judith Avila To-ledo and her sister, Imelda, had agreed to open a food outlet in the school canteen where the mother of their children is teaching in the land-fills-prone area in Pantukan town in Compostela Valley.

"Everything had been prepared," Toledo said. She said they had even raised fare money for Elmer Torrel, who was hired as canteen partial guard, "and were looking forward for his coming home."

Last talk

But five days before Elmer was to come home on Jan. 15, a series of landslides occurred in Sitio Dist. Uno in Barangay Banagbanag, Pantukan, burying houses and the existing community in Sitio Dist. Dos. His body, bloated and disordered, was among those found by rescuers and brought to Malaut Provincial Hospital on Friday.

Still grappling with her shock, Imelda recalled how she last talked with Elmer through cell phone at 2 p.m. on Jan. 4. Her husband said he had already advanced his pay and was sending it the following day to ride the family over.

He did not get the chance to send the money.

Imelda said Elmer left their home in Mulgta Basilisa in Dinagat Island on Dec. 3 last year to work as a patrol guard for Hinae Miners. "He did not get to spend Christmas and New Year with the family but he promised to return home on Jan. 30 to be on my birthday on Jan. 12," she said.

Identifying marks

After their talk, Imelda received a call the next day from Elmer's friend, telling her he died in the rain during the landslide survivors. She said she tried to reach Elmer by cell phone, but no one was answering her calls.

Some of the disaster personnel the two sisters to talk to Post about, where the army has set up an "incident command center" on the municipal hall grounds to keep track of search and rescue efforts in the area.

Imelda found Elmer at the funeral parlor, his skin so dark and body bloated. At first she did not believe it was him and it she found the tattoo on his arm and the cyst near his knee. "He had been complaining of that cyst and we were planning to go to Butuan to have it removed," she said.

Toledo said she hardly was aware that Elmer was risking his life working at the mineshe they climbed to visit a food business at the canteen of Talaon Elementary School to keep him for from danger.

Mining ban

Local Government Secretary Jesse Robredo said he would look into the culpability of local officials for failing to enforce a law banning mining activities in Mount Diwata when heavy rains occurred on December. Robredo sent to Bangsamoro in Barangay Kingking, where another landslide killed at least 26 people on Good Friday last year.

The commander Army Brigade's Army (NPA) said the government unit had itself to blame for the mining disasters and failing to provide jobs and livelihood for residents and urban poor who desperately risk their lives to the miner to eke out a living.

Mindanao-wide officials were quick to put the order requesting help to local authorities for educating small-scale miners," and a statement from the 50th Operation Battalion Command.

"The exploited poorest miners have no adequate funds to operate and they have poor have no jobs, the law to go to the countryside where they resort to backward and dangerous," it said.

Pampanga quarry fees target: ₱400M

MAGALANG, Pampanga—Gov. Lilia Pineda set a collection target of ₱400 million in fees and taxes from Mt. Pinatubo's sand and gravel quarries, after the provincial government granted a second to its annual collection last year.

Pineda said the province collected ₱236.1 million last year, the highest since 1995, but an increase could be attained this year because the national government, through the Department of Public Works and Highways, is set to implement its General Luna various infrastructure projects that will require sand.

The Intergovernmental Coordination Committee of the National Economic and Development Authority board approved the Arterial Road Bypass Project Phase 2 in Floridel, Bulacan (92.264 billion), Green Lupac Link Expressway Phase 1 (₱15.1.11 billion) in Nueva Ecija to Aurora, Concrete Multipurpose Irrigation and Power Project (₱7.244 billion) in Bataan and Tarlac, and the Integrated Disaster Response and Climate Change Adaptation Measures in Low Lying Areas of Pampanga Bay (₱4.057 billion).

"The provincial government is also charging an additional ₱50 in the FY50 administrative fee. It keeps this amount for regulating and monitoring small-scale and large-scale quarry operations.

The ₱15b sand test is slated by the provinces, towns and barangays is set by the Local Government Code of 1991. "Provincial will go to the general budget to hopefully fund more road services, especially for health," Pineda said.

The ₱236.1 million collected last year from the quarry industry surpassed the records of the administrations of past Gov. Eddie Panlilio in 2008 (₱156.2 million) and the many-annual Natural Resources Development Corp. in 1998 (₱141.2 million). —Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

Cebu officials back new tourism slogan

By Carmel Loise Mates
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—Provincial officials yesterday appealed for public support to the new tourism slogan "So more fun in the Philippines" initiated by the Department of Tourism (DOT).

"We are here diverging and confirming views amongst us to our country and we protect ourselves to the outside world, let us present a unified front," Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia said.

"So the final statement, it's set about my taste or your taste, it's all about what is good for our country. And what is good for our country is good for Filipinos. And so let's start having fun in the Philippines," Garcia said.

The DOT slogan might have been introduced to Boracay Island, but Visit Cebu Agusan Bisaya, who is also chair of the provincial board's tourism committee, said it did not mean the Philippines could not adopt it.

Magpale told reporters that compared to the previous slogan, "Pilipinas Kay Ganda," the new slogan was more "fit." Tourists arrived from there to Xmas, she said, adding that it was from the country to adopt another slogan.

She cited Cebu's slogan "Sugbo Sentro ng Sugbo" (Being Around Cebu) on Cebuano Island." She said provincial officials were looking for other slogans when, according to its guidelines, the island has been "discovered."

She also said Cebu could also adopt "It's more fun in the Philippines, Visit Cebu."

Magpale noted the need for more infrastructure and local facilities in the province. Citing Cadoon as an example, she said a "reliable" sea transportation is paramount.

NEWSBRIEFS

■ ILOILO

Cops ban guns in 'Dinagyang'

POLICE will impose a ban on firearms and toy guns as part of the security measures during the city's Dinagyang festival next week.

Chief Supt. Osmundo Sarmiento Jr., Western Visayas police director, said the Philippine National Police has suspended the issuance of permits to carry firearms outside of residence (PTCFOR) from Jan. 15 to 22.

Only on-duty security guards and law enforcers who are wearing uniforms will be allowed to carry firearms. The processing of applications for renewal of PTCFOR in Iloilo City will also be suspended. —Rovin P. Bacjao Jr., Inquirer Visayas

■ GENERAL SANTOS CITY

Experts 'disrupt' homemade bomb

POLICE on Sunday "disrupted" an improvised bomb found by a security guard and a bystander along Sarangani Street.

Director Felicisimo Khu, head of the regional explosives and ordnance disposal office, said the improvised explosive device, concealed inside a Pampers diaper, security guard of a family products outlet, and Pansing Mansion, who reported the presence of a dubious plastic bag containing the bomb that was "rather extensive," or explosive concealed in Indonesian cafe.

He said the bomb exploded from an 81 mm mortar projectile and a 9-volt battery. —Keisha T. Dava, Inquirer Mindanao

■ LAGUNA

Diocese sends P1.6M to victims

THE DIOCESE of San Pablo is sending more than P1.6 million in financial assistance to the victims devastated by Tropical Storm "Samuling" in the towns of Famy, Siniloan de Cruz and Pagsanjan.

The assistance, which was composed of money from parishioners in all parishes of the diocese during the Christmas Masses, has reached P1,600,400, said Fr. Pamel B. Rigor, director of the San Pablo Diocesan Social Action Center.

Bishop Leo M. Drona has asked the social action center to distribute the money to the victims. —Rainelle Perez, Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ QUEZON

Teen killed in blast

A TEENAGER boy was killed and three others injured in an improvised explosive device (IED) in Plaridel town on Wednesday, police said Thursday.

Nico Alvarez, 16, of Barangay Pasaraler, suffered body injuries and was declared dead on arrival at Quezon Provincial Hospital, said PO2 Leo Ramon Bautista, Plaridel police investigator.

Arrest here the 40 victims' conservationists in the mountainous area of Plaridel at 1:45 p.m. on Wednesday and as of noon the market to search of a concrete and of an abandoned structure devoted, according to Bautista.

Nico, Jayson Cobella, 15, and Michael Mojica, had the construction being detonated them explosion. Cobella suffered serious injuries in the body, said Bautista. —Jude T. Sabio Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ SCIENCE CITY OF MUÑOZ

2 students die in road accident

TWO STUDENTS of Central Luzon State University (CLSU) died, while three others were hurt in an accident in Barangay Kapitan Pablo, Science City of Muñoz, on Sunday.

Identified were Jonathan Jr. C. Cruz, security officer, and Shiennie Gaerlan, 18, of Aniban, Bataan; Ramon Ramos, and Lilibeth Lilibangan, 18, of Gumaca, Quezon Expo, that when their bicycle was damaged from the rear by a speeding 4-wheel vehicle driven by an unidentified and caused fractured the opposite lane and hit by a truck at 6:30 p.m. —Aaniban Hayan, Inquirer Central Luzon

31 Negros mayors pick PhilHealth

BACOLOD CITY—All 31 mayors in Negros Occidental will no longer withdraw from PhilHealth after the agency's president offered an easier payment scheme for the health insurance premiums of poor beneficiaries during a meeting last week.

PhilHealth president Eduardo Banzon said the local chief executives could register their beneficiaries for a two-year term, unlike the previous scheme. PhilHealth, he added, has promised to provide easier installment members.

The mayors had earlier pressed to withdraw payment of premiums for 180,000 indigent residents in PhilHealth rolls, saying that the agency was planning to increase the amount from P600 to P1,200 this year. Congress removed the national government's counterpart of P600, prompting the mayors, Banzon said.

Local officials said they could no afford the new rates with the expected drop in the internal revenue allotments (IRA) shares of cities and towns.

Instead of enrolling the indigents to PhilHealth, the mayors had planned to pay the money directly to member health insurance provider, the Negros Oriental Comprehensive Health Care Program. Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

Cancer care facility opens in Tagum

TAGUM CITY—The government opened a P127-million center for cancer patients here on Sunday providing affordable, adequate and accessible cancer to those afflicted in Mindanao.

The Mindanao Cancer Center at Davao Regional Hospital in Barangay Apokon "is one of the only three hospitals, government or private, in Mindanao that has the much advanced technology and facilities available to treat cancer," Health Secretary Enrique Ona said.

It is officially named the Radiotherapy Center.

"This will be a big help not only to our cancer victims here in Davao del Norte but also to all of Mindanao. We intend to make the services of the facility comparable with those in private hospitals, especially in Metro Manila," said Davao del Norte Governor Rodolfo del Rosario.

The center cost of the project was P157,447,500, with equipment alone worth P120.4 million. Fritzie O. Lim, Inquirer Mindanao

ROAD contractor's boys take into good concrete to prepare for the repavement of a long stretch of Marcos Highway, a major artery leading to Metro Manila, hoping to reopen it to traffic for the Baguio Flower Festival.

Quirino residents score slow gov't action on fallen bridge

MADDELA, Quirino—Residents in the western district of this province have assailed the slow action of the government in repairing a fallen bridge along the main highway in Barangay Villa Isora, which, they said, has been taking its toll on the local economy.

They lamented the lack of attention shown by officials over their plight, with local traders and farmers fearing the least of the problem with the difficulty of transporting their goods to and from this town and nearby Nagtipunan in the past three months.

"We do not know what to would take for our officials to do something because with the way they are acting right now, it's like they simply don't care," said a grocery store owner in Barangay Poblacion Norte, who asked not to be named for fear of harassment.

The Tangyab Bridge was damaged by Typhoon "Pedring" in September, isolating Quirino from the coastal towns of Isabela and Aurora, as well as Maddela and Nagtipunan towns from rest of the province.

This has put an added cost on basic commodities, mainly on the transport of goods and services from producer as cargo trucks could not deliver their load straight to public markets and other retail outlets.

"We always hear our lawyer in Congress complaining that we are taking advantage of the situation by getting as much profit as our products. But we have the risk of losses if we do not pass on the added transportation cost," said Mita Ison, a market vendor in Pangpangilingan in Nagtipunan town.

Office employees and students would have to spend an additional P20 in their daily fares.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) earlier constructed a detour road which passes through a rugged upland dirt road from Barangay Victoria in Aglipay to Barangay village in Maddela, prolonging travel time by almost two hours.

As an alternative, temporary repair work had been done on the bridge, but allowing only light vehicles, through a steep and narrow path on the damaged bridge.

Although the Tangyab Bridge is a national government concern, Gov. Junie Cua said the provincial and town governments have been monitoring closely with the DPWH and the private sector to ensure that the road would not be closed to traffic.

He cited the construction of the overflow bridge through the resources of the Quirino and Maddela governments, the DPWH and the local business sector.

"Unfortunately, due to unforeseen twists, the Libertad overflow bridge] was washed away and had to be rebuilt twice already," he said.

Cua said the bridge's new base bears delays in the construction of the temporary bridge because "as we all know, there is a process that has to be followed by the DPWH." Melvin Gascon, Inquirer Northern Luzon

5 Sipalay officials suspended

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—Five officials of the Sipalay City government in Negros Occidental have been suspended for three months for negligence when they bought overpriced medicines in 2008.

Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez implemented the order of the Office of the Ombudsman to suspend city accountant Eva Salonga; city budget officer Fernando Bellen; city health officer Noel Villanueva; city treasurer Jacinto Mendez; and executive assistant Ofelia Evangelista before Christmas.

The unsigned study found the five officials guilty of negligence in the performance of official duties for buying medicines at 100-400 percent more than the prevailing market prices. It covered 1,000 purchases in 2008, but the affidavit cited a random but reasonable exercise which the Ombudsman denied in August 2011 "for lack of plausible reason."

A complaint filed by Bio Pedalgo's Gerardo Lumbab Jr., 2,815, claimed the loss of violating the law when they purchased P784,081.70 worth of overpriced medicines and supplies.

According to the complaint, Villanueva, as city health officer, requested for the emergency purchase of medicines and supplies in November 2008 for residents of Barangay San Jose who developed respiratory illnesses from air pollution coming from an abandoned site of Hinoba-an Mines.

The complaint said the purchase was unlawful because during use that the dust pollution did not happen until January or February 2009. The weapon deals, however, told the Ombudsman that the dust pressure of any loss of lives and therefore did not cause injury to the city.

In its suspension order, the Ombudsman said the city treasury was the one "injured" because of the overprice. "The respondents' failure to discern that they were buying those items at overpriced rates is, at the very least, inexcusable, if not suspicious," it said.

It added: "The nature of an emergency purchase should not be abused and this is the more case we are seeing here."

Road repairs, traffic jams greet Baguio

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—Heavy traffic welcomed residents and tourists to the summer capital this week when a government contractor drilled holes into a well-paved stretch of Marcos Highway to prepare this major route to Metro Manila for repavement.

Time is no friend, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) warned in January the continuation of its national road program, which requires contractors to install new pavements and under drainage lines for roads maintained by the national government, said Bonso Gallato, district engineer.

"We received the P221.1-million allocated for Baguio last week so we can start right away," he said.

This year, Gallato said he had scheduled the latest of national road rehitching projects as the city prepares to embrace major events to welcome tourists: the Baguio Flower Festival and Philippine Military Academy (PMA) homecoming in February. But grueling slow movements for PMA graduates universities here in March, and the Holy Week in April.

The city's peak tourist season begins in December and tapers off by in May.

But contractors again complained because the construction ding both sides of a 1,370-kilometer stretch of Marcos Highway leading to the city proper.

Buses and motorists fuming and cursing Baguio would have no easy for the 40 contractors working stretch of the highway because of the road reconstruction.

Truck accident

A truck traveling on the three-lane stretch ended up on its side on Sagubo when its driver lost control of the vehicle and hit a protrusion. The cursor, Hamboos, 46, a carpenter, died.

Five days after the Marcos Highway section was dug up, the contractor had cut 120 meters of concrete, leaving a hospital that the firm could complete its contract before the end of February," Gallato said.

The P20-million Marcos Highway contract covers the second week of January to the first week of May, a 40-calendar work chart provided by DPWH showed.

Motorists have been bound for last-minute traffic jams in major roads, because the contractor said no permits were started without the DPWH giving the details of the project and allowances notice to motorists and residents.

Aside from the Marcos Highway contract, the Baguio engineering district has scheduled 17 other national road projects between January and July, Gallato said.

Flower festival

He said he was aware that many tourists visit Baguio in February to watch the annual Panagbenga street dancing and float parades. "So I coordinated with the traffic police, the city government and the contractors to make sure that road projects begun early would be open to traffic by the end of February," he said.

Many of the new road projects are to the central business district, but these have been programmed to start after the flower festival.

For example, the P16-million rehitching and concrete overlay contract for Mirador Road here will start in the third week of January and end in the second week of February.

But the P16-million drainage structure for Mharan Road Intersection will take place from the second week of March to the third week of April.

The P30-million connecting contract for Governor Pack Road Connecting SM City Baguio, the Baguio Convention Center and University of the Philippines Baguio starts in the first week of March and will end in the last week of June.

Connecting work on Chamalis Street, also in Session Road, will start on March and end in the third week of May, while the P20-million connecting of Kisad Road behind the park will start in the last week of March and end in the last week of June.

DPWH contractors will upgrade also the pavement of a road near the PMA in April, while another 1.15 km of Magallan Road will be repaved from March to May at a P16-million contract. Magallan Road was closed for months since the end of 2011 for rehabilitation work.

The DPWH has contracted out the asphalt overlay of five roads, including Leonard Wood Road; Dobluk loads to the Baguio Botanical Garden, the Mansion Road; Dobluk and Marcos Highway; Park) from the third week of January to the second week of February; and Harrison Road (Bonifacio Bonifacio Park) from the third week of January to the second of February.

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Libel complaint vs CamSur gov, PDI junked

THE MAKATI City prosecutor's office has junked a libel complaint filed by a former provincial board member against Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymundo Villafuerte Jr. and reporter Jerome Aning, saying public officials cannot be "too thin-skinned" in handling criticisms.

The case stemmed from an opinion story written by the newspaper's researcher Johann Quindoy and which appeared on July 22, 2011. Villafuerte revealed what he said was an attempt by the complainant, Cesar Imelda, to extort money from him in exchange for the dropping of graft and corruption charges he had filed against the governor.

Quindoy was included in the complaint for writing the report without Imelda's consent.

"Complainant subject a public figure similar to that of Villafuerte, Jr. and as such complainant cannot clothe himself against public scrutiny and against a defending libeled respondent like Villafuerte Jr.," the prosecutor's office said in a resolution.

Promulgated on Dec. 19, 2011, the resolution was written by Assistant Prosecutor Cesar Mitra and approved by Senior Assistant Prosecutor Christopher Estrella.

In dismissing the libel case, it said Villafuerte was just defending himself and explaining to the public the reasons behind the charges Imelda filed against him.

Imelda ran for vice governor during the 2010 elections and was defeated during the election bets bearing records in run again for the same position in 2013, the resolution stated.

"Thus, with the exchange of libelous charges between complainant and respondent Villafuerte, this office sees no sufficient grounds to hold respondent Villafuerte, Jr. liable for libel as the same was merely an act of self-defense which extends not only to his person but to his reputation as well," it said.

As for Quindoy's participation, the prosecutor's office said it didn't find malice in the story and was convinced that it was written only as reported or as gathered by the source. The personal comments or remarks were included in the story, it added.

"The fact that the article was offensive to the herein complainant does not automatically make a case for libel against the author, publisher and the source. It is still essential that the complaint should sufficiently establish actual malice; this office finds none," it said. Ana Zita, Inquirer Research

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Place for fun

"IT'S MORE FUN in the Philippines." The new tourism slogan, although the same as the slogan used by Switzerland in the 1950s, does sound like an attractive catchphrase for promoting the country in the world of tourism. Despite some of the country's negative aspects, the slogan does project the Philippines as a place for fun, enjoyment and relaxation.

EDITORIAL

The Philippines has a tropical climate that can be enjoyed by Westerners during their freezing winters. It has great, pristine beaches such as those in Boracay, Amanpulo, El Nido, Camotes and Panglao (Bohol). It has other beautiful tourist spots like the Chocolate Hills of Bohol, Mayon Volcano in Albay, Taal Volcano in Batangas, the Banaue Rice Terraces and the Underground River in Palawan, to name just a few. It has the spectacular Manila sunset which never fails to awe the viewers at twilight time.

The lush vegetation; the lakes, rivers, waterfalls; the exotic flora and fauna of the country are things enjoyed by the tourists who visit the country. A Saudi minister once said, "God gave an oil but took away the weather; He did not give the Philippines oil but gave you many things to enjoy."

But more than its natural attractions, the Philippines is to be enjoyed because of its people. The Philippines has one of the most cheerful people in the world; the 2009 Happy Planet Index said the Philippines is the 14th happiest place in the world. A joint study by Asia Asia Life and research company Taylor Nelson Sofres in 2003 gave the Philippines an even higher happiness ranking. It said that Filipinos are the second happiest and most optimistic people in Asia and have a positive outlook on life in general. Tourists cannot help but be "infected" by the happiness of the constantly smiling Filipinos.

The secret of the Filipinos' happiness may be in their sense of humor. Dr. Marie Rhodora Ancheta of the Department of Comparative Literature, College of Arts and Letters of the University of the Philippines, believes national humor is a potent showcase of "Filipino-ness" and helps us survive. Humor, whether oral or written, demonstrates the strength of the Filipino character and shows how laughter is used to reduce conflicts between people.

The tourist will not find lots in the Philippines. He will be moving and interacting with hospitable countrymen of the world. Filipinos may be poor financially but they are rich culturally and ethnically. The Filipino is basically of Malay stock with a sprinkling of Chinese, Spanish, American and Arab blood. Many Filipinos, because of their exposure to other cultures in the principal cities and places abroad where they have worked, have a smattering of such languages as French, Italian, German, Japanese and Korean.

The Department of Tourism says that the Filipino character is a little bit of all the cultures put together. "East is East and West is West, and ne'er the twain shall meet," but they do meet in the Philippines. The hospitality spirit or spirit of kinship and camaraderie is said to be taken from Malay forefathers. The close family relations were inherited from the Chinese and their Confucian culture. Their piety comes from the Spaniards who introduced Christianity into the country. The Filipino's musicality is also legendary.

One big factor that makes a tourist feel at home in the Philippines is the fact that Filipinos are a largely English-speaking people. In fact, the Philippines is said to be the third largest English-speaking country in the world.

The people are perhaps the biggest factor that makes it fun for tourists to visit the Philippines. Hospitality, a trait displayed by every Filipino, makes the people legendary not only in Asia but also the entire world. Due to their long association with Spain, Filipinos are emotional and passionate about life in a way that seems more Latin than Asian, the tourism department says.

"It's more fun in the Philippines." We have the natural attractions and the people who can lure tourists into the country. Now, let's work on the problems of infrastructure and peace and order that will make the country a truly ideal place for tourists to visit.

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Rules

VIEWPOINT

Jean L. Mercado

"IF YOU don't like their rules, whose would you use?" Charlie Brown asks in the storied winning comment on my Wednesday.

Investigative reporter Marites Vitug reported that the University of Santo Tomas lost value in rent as Walt degree on Chief Justice Renato Corona, so, he never submitted a dissertation and never shot CET's complete to the years pending.

"Young men know the rules," argued Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who served in US Supreme Court justice from 1902 to 1932. "But old men know the exceptions."

Sen. Francis Escudero stressed over "piecemeal leakage of evidence" against Corona by some House of Representatives prosecutors. "Respect the Senate as an impeachment court," Escudero snapped. "Observe its rules."

Are certain actions about impeachment rules? asked Inquirer's Conrado de Quiros. Then they should count Supreme Court administrator Ma. Lourdes Sereno, who is paid by salary with taxpayers' money, against lowering for Corona."

In graduated sense, rules is subjugated laws are routinely violated. Over 113 people were submitted by mudslides in Compostela Valley since 2003. That number is now 30 killed last week, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council revealed.

Floods spawned by Tropical Storm "Seniang" wiped out an entire community perched on a sandbar dubbed "Isla de Oro." The town's death toll in Northern Mindanao is now exceeds 1,453. Some missing persons will never be accounted for.

"They create the threat who watch the present, and hovers from the past," Cagayan de Oro Mayor Vicente Emano said his allies never learned from past "mistakes." But the Ormoc tragedy 1991 (some City records Within an hour, floodwaters dumped by Typhoon "Uring" swept 1,371 people to their deaths. Emano denies he was playing poker when Pepsie typhoon fully roamed. But flooding had occurred from Cebu to the Cagayan Valley.

"Rules are for the obedience of fools but guidance of wise men," Emano, who is all of it, agrees. She scribbled 12 guidelines for the study team the shares with one other grandslaughter Kassima, 3. Kassie captioned her handiwork "Rules."

"Don't give the dolls a shower," says Rule No. 5. Rule No. 6, a sibling-ay: "Don't put the shampoo on your skin." These are preceded by Rule No. 2: "Maximize your voice."

Rule No. 9 stipulates: "No throwing items without permission [sic]." "Should it be double "c"?" asked Kassie, who wrote instead the notice. She gravelled in the correction—and scrawled (while No. 11: "Don't be so mean." (The reason "mean," of course.) But you catch the drift: Rules kept result in order.

The Constitution contains basic rules. One is Article VII. It bans appointments two months before a presidential election. That prohibition holds until the end of the incumbent's term, i.e., noon of June 30. It was proposed by Delegate Hector Chief Justice Hilario Davide and ditched into the 1987 Constitution to prevent a repeat of the midnight appointments by previous presidents.

Carlos P. Garcia named 2,000 to various posts. Diosdado Macapagal copied that number. Ferdinand Marcos beat Macapagal's daughter with a third of Versailles' hotel to "blocking the midnight bell." Between 6/30/86 Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stuffed midnight-hot into a score of agencies, from the Monetary Board, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to the Court of Appeals.

In a "Columbo" episode, the criminal inspector, on a different mission, discovers Papers presented Malacañang gardener Armando Macapagal to the board of the Loreto Park, and his former chief of staff Senator Corona as Supreme Court chief justice.

"Hey," murmured the President's mastermind, Anita Carpati. "Count me out." She had been given a midnight appointment to the board of the Pag-Ibig Fund. There is one lady who still knows how to blush.

Did Corona think rebate he accepted the post of chief justice? Who knows? What we know is that Corona had sufficient warning.

"According to the Asiaweek (Dec 13/96)2) and Valenzuela case (1995), when the presidential election, the authority of the incumbent to only to ensure an orderly transfer of power" one commented expert Joaquin Bernas, SJ pointed out. If he or she insisted on naming a chief justice, she created the possibility that Congress would impeach him. That has now come to pass.

Former Sen. Rene Saguisag has consistently held that Corona is a "de facto, not de jure chief justice." As such, Corona has "sole responsibility" under Presidential Decree No. 1949 for the billion-peso Judiciary Development Fund. But Saguisag's students fielded to have no information on the 200 bit a block wall.

Indeed, Chief Justice is the least transparent branch of government. Greg Bruno in her award-winning book "Shadow of Doubt: Probing the Supreme Court."

In your transparency, Republic Act 6713 stipulates that public officials must "accomplish and submit declarations under oath of and the public has the right to know (their) assets, liabilities, net worth and financial and business interests, including those of their spouses."

"Corona cannot hide behind an illegal self-serving interpretation" exempting the Supreme Court from a requirement others comply with, Saguisag says.

Justices Antonio Carpio and Maria Lourdes Sereno, meanwhile, have released their statements of assets, liabilities and net worth. Other justices insist in the mind. Actress Katherine Luna says they will do the same: "If you have the rules, you'll miss all be fine."

(Email: jean.mercado77@yahoo.com)

Joke

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE JOKES goes cold.

I was sorely tempted by Juliet Arroyo's letter the other day. I have been called many names, including perjury, but Marcos collaborator is a new one. Throughout the struggle against martial law, he said, I was not just a mere spectator but a rotten informer of the Bolcaniegas. I humored so, he said, even after that dictatorship fell and Cory's government arose. He was not for Marcos, he was for Marcos, he called Cory Queen of Darkness, and patronized her during the Peninsula Manila massacre. That when everyone he hated had fled Ninoy, there Cory), he saw an opening through which he might elegantly jump into the favor of those who had hunted his unforgettable candidacy."

And I thought Juliet was a lawyer. Lawyers at least get their facts right, even if they give them the retarded interpretations. The scale of his blindness to one humongous have in national life during martial law and immediately after is breathtaking. That have not very easily called the Left. The Movement, the Radicals in his vocabulary, there were only two sides: Ninoy-Cory and Marcos. If you criticized the one, you must be for the other. That's idiotic.

I have been writing columns since 1986, funnily Juliet went to able to regale the world with one piece (or paragraph, or sentence) I have written that defends in any shape, form, or size, and to any manner, subtly, blatantly, laughably, Marcos and his cohorts.

As for what I did during martial law, I might as well set the record straight since Juliet's asinine nose crop up now and then in dubious blogs and trashy publications citing those blogs. I worked for the Left Underground, throughout martial law. In the course of that I was assigned to join our government information office and another. What exactly I was asked to do, or indeed what I did generally for the movement, I will not go into but I add to say density with the military. Enemy of that heretofore I wanted. Control to learn the enemy and NPA just needed a military character to do so then on the ground that. Quite true "derogatory information" about me. I got to know only after the dictators, that head of the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, endorsed my rap to an Alice Reich literary conference in Moscow and Angola.

People who argue indirectly at the tail-end of martial law when fighting Marcos had gotten popular, shouldn't really be coming about their exploits. People who never risked life and limb, and those who risked them regularly, from the beginning of martialism, in the pit of martial law, shouldn't really be thumping their chests. When never. It insults the legions who died or disappeared then, with only their memory to console their passing and keep their memories alive, but adorns the glamour of those of freedom latching, enough for them to have to be reaping for when Nino himself was killed.

I did say at Cory's unveiling(s) time—in which I, the Cory-hater, was invited to speak and joke, the Cory-lover, was not—and I did just come from the ranks of the Selfless. I came from the ranks of the Reds. But I remain eminently proud.

As to my carrying beer with Ninoy after he "came back to the unstoppable candidacy," surely he must have read—or heard about, since reading the layman is not his favorite pastime—my column "Sturgeon for president" long before it comes picked up the city and long before Max Soliven turned to the unwashable.

So, Juliet, it is not a question of "being disgusted before the deeds." The people are not dumb, which is your outsized mistake and mistaken conceit, trying hard as you are to exclude them from Renato Corona's impeachment in the course of objectivity. It is grandiose at being credible, which you get only from being consistent. That is what makes for real power, not being a columnist, or indeed senator. Those are mere trappings of power.

The only thing you have been consistent about after John 2—is what you do own your position today, although you have chosen only to vote Gloria, who was to remember spares—is finding nothing wrong with her. You found everything wrong with PJV ("there is a constitutional remedy for corruption but none for impolicy"), you found everything wrong with the Lozadas who exposed the NBN, you found everything wrong with the people who wanted to end the despotism of the one person who most resembled the years you once helped to depose. But you found nothing wrong with Gloria.

And now you find everything wrong with P-Noy. And still you find nothing wrong with Gloria.

What is wrong with continuing senators from being unduly influenced by outside commentary? Because it leaves the field to you and senators like you, who are as objective about Gloria and Corona as deciphering Marcos is about his ballet. Because it confines appraisal and judgment solely to you and senators like you, who, like Gloria, entices themselves, or indeed like Marcos himself, love citing lies while closing people's closets. Because it runs the risk of the senators like you and senators like you, who say Gloria as the best thing to have happened to democracy, the way George Bush did Marcos, and P-Noy, who has shown himself admirably, inspiringly, objectively determined to right wrongs, as the worst threat to it.

That is all you have been consistent about. Otherwise, you have been consistent only in the same way Juan Ponce Enrile and Miriam Defensor-Santiago have been consistent about their locations. Whichever is pity really. You were so high to run someone by fighting Marcos only to fall so low by championing his clone. One would think that at one point—Juliet, one gets wiser, but it was, and is, Gloria's enormous talent to have enhanced disadvantage.

Hypocrisy? You're a maverick only to the principles you once held. Which has turned you now into.

Ayoko.

Cashing in on aging

SOME TIME ago, my family and I visited an aging octogenarian aunt brought home from abroad by my cousin (her daughter), who had long been working in Europe with her Swedish husband and their children. My aunt had broken her ankle in a Swedish seafront, but with their busy lifestyle and expensive health care in Europe, my cousin saw it fit to have her cared for and pampered in her home. And so she brought her to a little-known specialized private institution catering to ailing foreign senior citizens, located in their hometown of Calbayog, Leyte to fit in and—for the most was the only Filipino patient in the entire facility. Her monthly rate (which is one of the town's best-kept secrets) locked in one of the town's mortgage makers me wonder how many more of such business to exist elsewhere in the country.

That exciting home is but one of many ways that enterprising investors are riding on a global trend that is particularly pronounced in different countries in Europe and North America, and in nearby Japan. But of aging populations. Longer life expectancies are dramatically changing country population profiles over the years. More and more people are living beyond 80 years, which has made senior citizens much more prominent in the populations of the world compared to the past. Japan has the oldest average. The fastest-growing population segment in the developed world is in fact now 80 years old, and because women tend to outlive men, women dominate the age group at a ratio of 2 to 1.

Projections by the United Nations have the number of the elderly to double and more doubling from around 600 million in 2000 to 1.2 billion to 2025, rising further to 2 billion by 2050. Two-thirds of all older people currently live in the developing world; the UN projects this figure to rise to three-quarters by 2025. But unlike past generations of the elderly, the younger cohort of senior citizens would be the first generation to age with a potentially higher level of health and education. This arises from improvements in public health and education owing to dramatic technological improvements. In particular, public health has been uplifted by advancements in the medical sciences and technologies for disease prevention and control. The level and reach of education have similarly been elevated by such factors as advancements in the neuroscience and in information and communication technology.

Within the general scenario of aging populations, five things distinguish the new generation of senior citizens from their predecessors. They are much more numerous, more healthy, more educated, more wealthy and more active. Erik Erikson and Peter Kelley in a 2005 paper "Demographic Challenge," wrote: "Who would have thought, in the 1960s that the Rolling Stones would still be touring 40 years later, or that the audiences of many rock concerts would be well into their sixties? Who would have thought that the role of doctor primary would peak in Japan when the first baby boomers started to retire. Nobody could have imagined the Internet. But who would have thought that the largest group using Internet dating would be people over 50?"

More interestingly, feminine segments of the population, this age group is challenging notions of retirement and, even more, the perception of being old. The authors continued: "With improved health, education and economic security, this generation is able to continue to enjoy traveling, materialist (Louis Bernard) and busy lives. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that the average age of a female buyer is 58, being above 60 in larger female banking, behaving and acting in the image of a grandparent of yesteryears. They run charities, go to jazz clubbing, go out in the evening, work as volunteers—in short, they are visible and they are active."

Along with higher life expectancies, reduced fertility rates are transforming population profiles in those worldwide rich countries into an inverted pyramid where senior citizens will dominate and young people will constitute a narrow base. This phenomenon is already running serious problems in their social security systems, as there are now more retirees drawing from the system than working-age citizens paying into it. Exacerbated by shaky investment binations, governments are being forced to reduce social security benefits and raise the premiums that today's workers have to pay—a surefire formula for an old unrest, already manifesting in Europe.

The Philippines is well positioned to cash in on various opportunities from these global aging trends. Our demographic pattern is much different from much of the world, especially neighboring Asian countries, because of a persistently high population growth rate. The result is a population profile where the working-age population continues to be dominant, thereby providing a large labor pool seeking employment and livelihood opportunities. With this comes the potential for economic opportunities arise in private products and services, including organic foods, medical tourism, caregiving facilities centers and retirement centers.

At the same time, rising dependency ratios (ratio working relative to nonworking population) is no concern for the Philippines, as growing numbers of retired persons will lead to even further tightening in their labor markets. This means that contemporaries for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) will remain high and growing in the next 20 years, even as jobs will beyond professions and services focused on senior citizens.

Given global demographic trends and prospects, then, it seems that the OFW phenomenon will be with us much longer than we think.

• • •

E-mail: cielito.habito@gmail.com

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

Pag-ibig 101

LET ME just say that my dating life is not something I can brag about during drinking sessions. I have never been in a serious relationship, although I have had my fair share of "flirtationships" in the past.

In my early teens, I had the emotional maturity of a 5-year-old. I, along with countless other school girls, would swoon over the guy in the assistant band one day and go head over heels for the varsity star the next day. But the bewitching power of the undisclosed who sent the electric guitar could only hope for so long. Needless to say, we moved on.

In a few years, teenage angst changed me. Violent EMO bouts and over-analyzing-into songs led me to believe that the perfect guy for me was an artist. I would be the "girl behind the artist" world of shallow and sensitive. I pursued their circles, indulging in purely abstract paintings, indie films and underground music. Coffee shops were suddenly the place to be for me.

But as the future loomed, I talked like I was always on the verge of tears. But I never actually cried. Crying was for insecure teen soap opera characters, not me.

I began avoiding books on philosophy that I never really understood. I forced myself to use big words about love in solitary conversations. I wanted to believe I was hip, but the truth was that I was just a melodramatic wannabe intellectual.

Before long, I was unsuccessful to provide relationship with a fellow "hipster." His ultra-deviant views which bordered on the anti-social trend, fit well on me. One thing led to another, and we broke off whatever it was we had (or never had, to begin with), and I was back to my old pop culture self.

Somewhere along the way, I got so fed up with my unsuccessful attempts at relationships with men that I began to think that maybe I was queer, so I had yet another failed pursuit: relationships with other girls as women. Unsurprisingly, it did not end in tragedy like my previous pseudo-relationships. After all, we are just two girls who happened to be lonely or that time and sought comfort in each other. So we settled on friendship, and it turned out to be a great one.

Yes, could say I have been in and out of the dating game for quite some time. Okay so maybe more of it was in-her and I was only half-serious, but still. . .

My experience with commitment (or the lack thereof) has taught me a couple of things. One is that when you enter a relationship, only one of two things can happen: you either get married or you break up. So if you don't see yourself having a family, raising kids, growing old or spending the rest of your life with your partner, something is wrong with the picture. It's only a matter of time before the other option kicks in. As Antonio de Saint-Exupéry said, "Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction." It could not have been put any better.

Dear me, not a day! I try to avoid the seemingly inevitable. Do not get me attached in spite of the moment flings. Planning (even!) is bound to end in heartbreak. Insert your pillow the tears.

Yes, falling in love was never meant to be an identity crisis. Don't change for the person you think you love. Being the right person is being yourself, the other gets the full package or no package at all. What's the point of being in a relationship if, in the confusion, you end up losing the most important thing: your personal self?

There, do not settle for an "MU" type of relationship—an open relationship, as some people call it. It's like making love and leaving the windows wide open for all the neighbors to see and (God forbid) join. We could mean Mojo using Pandig, Malaya Sunday, whatever! If you don't have the guts to leave! If you care for each other, more honest and earth to make it work. There is no wrong time and wrong place for the right person. Do not complicate things. MU simply is Malabong Bagsak.

Pray, do yourself and the world a huge favor, and stop dating revenge or your ex. Maybe the glass shot didn't do the first time around. Besides, there is I may not have survived and to be losing five or ten rejected it. But there are 20 other letters, and infinite numbers—more than you could ever count, or as many as there are fish in the sea. One fish out there in the ocean of possibilities is bound to be your perfect catch. One break up doesn't mean the end of the world. You are still young (and) even if you are old), you deserve to be happy.

Plus, you are a woman and you live in the 21st century. You are not a damsel in distress. Knights in shining armor are so last millennium. Make the first move. So, that doesn't make you pathetic and desperate. It makes you a strong, intelligent woman who can adapt to change and is not afraid of her own feelings. However, it does make people who think otherwise a heartbreaker.

Six and most importantly, learn to love yourself. It is true that you can't give what you don't have. How can you expect to love and to be loved if, for some twisted reason, you don't give yourself any respect?

There's about everything I have learned. There are other lessons I am sure. But I don't try to give them to me in advance; I'm not a fan of spoilers. And I am sorry if I sounded preachy. Toughlove, I guess.

Take it from this single (not bitter, but just sane enough) girl: Relationships tend to be messy, so unless you are sure, don't gamble. Love is an investment with no money-back guarantee. It all also fails, be guided by reason but follow your heart.

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Ana Catalina Puje, 19, works part-time for an NGO and plans to continue her studies next year.

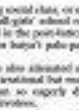
Batya't palu-palo' Christianity

MY FRIEND Kenny Bildara calls it "batya't palu-palo (watchmen) and wooden club)" spirituality. Our elders, of course, in folk Catholicism...a blend of lewd native animism and formal Catholic piety and devotion—that surfaces on such occasions as yesterday's Feast of the Black Nazarene. And because this kind of faith is adopted most, fervently by the poor and unlettered, it's been named after wooden weapons, symbolizing the hardy and hard-working poor.

As if it wasn't enough that Filipino Catholics sport a major part of newest wrestling early church history, we also specialize in a good part of Christmas (but and Semana Santa) that for churches are observed in the New Year with one of the most confirmations and unruly observances on the local liturgical calendar. The local calendar, mind, since the Feast of the Black Nazarene is observed only here, where the image of Poleo traveling the Quiapo, moved from Medieval wood, was enshrined in the Quiapo church, although the devotion is also observed elsewhere in these islands.

The love-hate devotion is ascribed to the supposedly miraculous powers of the image, and the parade is fraught with danger. Many of the participants who believe that helping lead the image through the twisting streets and alleys of Quiapo district, or wiping a towel or handker chief on its limbs, assures them that their prayers will be answered.

Devotees, many of whom demonstrate the power of their faith by wearing the Quiapo church's special sash on their knees in practice discouraged by parishes, though as far as I know, it persists), can gain access to the "Poon Nazareno Diamante Image" on other days of the year. But lining up behind the statue of Quiapo church to touch the feet of the Black Nazarene is a battle-cry as its loud name much less genteel and effective for most of the Nazarene's devotees, the best and most efficacious way to demonstrate one's faith is to *labor* into the rolling mob and fight for space among those clinging to the rope, or throw a towel to the image and hope that it lands where they said. Judge it as the image and remember where the piece of cloth came from.



AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

• • •

MAYBE I'm from the wrong social class, or my Catholic education in an all-girls' school run by American nuns stopped in the post-Vatican II ethos ill-prepared me for batya't palu-palo Christianity.

If so, those factors have also alienated me from the deeply personal, irrational but mercurial brand of Catholicism so eagerly displayed by the Nazarene's devotees.

Or maybe it's just me. I remember a child, head spent accompanying my mother on her weekday devotions—a visit to Quiapo where I observed the kneeling communers, an hour spent in meditation before the altar of Sto. Cristo church, and an obligatory visit to the "church" of Divorcia—a hero that brought peace of mind and trusted me in touch at Sling Shots!—and craving to myself that I would never subject a child of mine to such mind-numbing activities.

It was also Mama's early morning nagging on Sundays to jump out of bed and get dressed for Mass (but Mama, it's only 5:30 a.m.!) the wails of old. I admit that there are some Sundays when I'm taken by a sudden itch to dress in my Sunday best and head my family to church. But that is more assurance by inertia and the delights of the Sunday newsfeast TV shows and the Sunday crossword.

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SO you can understand why I take a rather standoffish attitude toward Monday's fiesta. And as a citizen, I have to wonder if separation of Church and State is not somehow violated by the huge public expense of providing police protection, security, traffic and traffic and clearing of halls, who keep fainting, collapsing, breaking limbs, or even go trampled underfoot by other believers.

Indeed, in the days leading up to the feast of the Black Nazarene, it seemed as if nothing else was happening in the country. It was as if Quiapo, once medievally described as the "armpit" of Manila in a guide book, had become "Carousel De" in those islands. And no amount of warnings, including a personal appearance by no less than PNoy who sounded an alarm regarding alleged terrorist presence in the host, could keep the crowds away.

I'll never understand what would drive either a person to faint, or collapse and suffocate while on this day, dwarfing their humanity, strapping down towels around their heads, and bringing their devotion and prayers. Their desperation and their hopes, to the feet of a dark wooden image bedecked with a huge cross.

The Nazarene, maybe it's not for me, or other skeptics, to understand. Yet without fuss, as St. Augustine remarked, there is no understanding.

• • •

AS I write this, the procession is still wending its way through the districts of Quiapo and environs. The reporters on duty may not venture to do, provide our fellow church-sitter until after the van area.

City streets and gutters are said to be buried under a blanket of trash, while devotees, who managed to escape the crush of the rope, wristlets, were already roped on sidewalks, drinking beer and eating.

This morning, I would guess that the metro's army of street sweepers would be busy cleaning up the mess (and the waste), and restoring the grimy district of Quiapo to a semblance of its usual self. Otherwise, many of the poor's thrones and flag merchants that make the precarious by ordinary folk in the area took part in the devotions, meaning for a whole year's worth of criminality by a city's show of hands.

But that's batya't palu-palo Christianity for you. No sense of more or considerations, only a strong and unwavering belief in Divine Providence and forgiveness.

Meaning beyond mystery

THE "THREE KINGS," or more properly the "wise men," had a problem. Their study of the stars had told them that a great king had been born in Judea, and they had set out on a long and dangerous journey. Following the star, to find him and do him homage. Strangely, neither King Herod nor the experts in the Jewish Scriptures knew anything of such a birth. And strangest of all, the star led them not to a royal palace but to a simple peasant home, proving what people had long suspected.

Surely they must have asked themselves whether their journey was all a mistake, whether they should return home and forget the whole thing. It's the Gospel with an easy simplicity. "On coming in the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary and they fell down and worshiped him."

The science of their day had brought them to the door of the house. But there science ended and it required a leap of faith for them to distinguish from their camels, sleep perhaps to enter the house, and to fall on their knees before a peasant child being cradled by a simple peasant woman and her husband.

That leap of faith, though they were surely not fully aware of it at the time, took them into a whole new world of meaning—meaning centered on that baby and yet extending out to the very limits of time and space. It was a leap into "seeing" the invisible God in the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

The "Word" or "Logos" in the original Greek of John's Gospel was the creative wisdom, principle of intelligibility that gives order and meaning to

COMMENTARY

John J. Carroll, S.J.

John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues

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all creation and to our lives. In faith the wise men found it in that baby. They are rewarded as the first Gentiles born—the first "nations" that gift of faith, the first of billions of Christians down through the centuries to whose lives the birth of that baby has brought meaning and direction.

Whatever may be the historical truth for the story of the wise men, I see it as bearing a lesson for us in the face of our sophisticated and complex world.

Science has progressed incredibly beyond the astrology of the wise men in pioneering the science of our world. The theory of evolution, the discoveries of biologists and astronomers and nuclear physicists have revealed a world of mind-boggling complexity and dimension in time and space, a world of forces so delicately fine-tuned that any one of dozens of conceivable variations would make life as we know it impossible in our universe. Scientists who have probed deeply into these mysteries are gripped, I am told, by a sense of awe and by a religious sense.

To explain the tremendous improbability of this fine-tuning without a Grand Designer, some evolutionists invoke the Many World theory in which our "universe" is only one among many "universes," one in which conditions happen to be right for even this little approach to life. Others, in a leap, where we face the question of meaning: Why is it that something exists rather than nothing? Are the values which we cherish—the dignity of the human person, human rights—real? Are they anything more than the chance products of evolution? Is there a real difference between an Adolf Hitler and a Mother Teresa? Is a life attributed to Albert Einstein, Thou the universe care?

Perhaps but does in the Easter Gospel recently have finish the finest relatives to such existential questions. In any case, I find it much easier to accept the meaning of life and death portrayed in the story of the life, the teachings and miracles, the death and the resurrection of the child whom the wise men found, than to try to make sense of a life and a world which are ultimately meaningless.

And I am not alone in this. Recently, a friend who had done relief work in Japan after the "Tsunami" disaster recounted one incident to me, with a catch in her voice. A mother was found in a relief center nursing seriously ill her and her husband, insisting that they share the little food he had. Only gradually did it come out that he, a new city guard, had been away from his home on duty when the fury of the floodwaters struck. He could not be relieved by self guilt because he still had two children at their work to the second floor of their house, and then to the roof. Over there was silence as the house was washed away. Days later he found the body of his wife, horribly recognizable the bodies of his children had not been found.

That's the kind of despair out of this man's life, meaningful he had nothing more to live for. Yet he remained calm and at peace, reminiscent of others, as he reflected on the story of Job in the Old Testament, on the assurance that there really is meaning behind the mystery of suffering and death.

I think we can all learn a little from this world's ways to a man in his situation, but for myself I thank God for the gift of faith.

• • •

Comments welcome at jjcarroll@ateneo.edu

YOUNG BLOOD

Ana Catalina Puje

THEY SAID

Only the best

"Getting a laptop is one and has never been part of the concept that exists in our family. At the end of the day, whatever I appoint. I would have to be able to look at any of our respective and say: 'This is the best.'"

—President Aquino in an SMC interview before the meeting, on the search for a new chief justice

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UST used to stick to its rules

LETTERS

THE NEWS item in the 23 December, which the University of Santo Tomas was reported to have urged the press not to drag items like 1967 to the impeachment controversy and where UST also notably claims a "long tradition of integrity and unblemished reputation, commitment to excellence" among other criteria or standards to attain to this effect, is belabored for—an experience with UST authorities involving a younger brother of mine, Ignacio ("Nasi").

Nasi was refused admission to continue his second year in the UST College of Medicine, it was the dictate of our family, my parents, especially, that Nasi also finish his medicine, like his older sister Liberated (UST Medicine, Class '58), at UST, where I got a degree from its College of Philosophy and Letters. So, we appealed the case of Nasi to the dean then and the father regent of the UST Faculty of Medicine. Protests were pleaded, my sister Liberated, my maternal aunt Sor Maria Caridad (a Dominican nun, older even than the principal of a Dominican school here), and my other sister, Nuria (who also taught in the Dominican school). A friend, a staff member brought the academic record of my brother which revealed he had flunked all his second year bacteriology subjects except Religion, which made the father regent to observe with a crackle, "Well, at least he passed Religion!" Which brought a soft laughter from his aura, but finality.

Academic standards were academic standards to 95% of course, as despite the earnest plea of his two Dominican siblings and his Dominican aunt, there was declined admission.

Nasi went to Cebu where, learning his lessons in life, he finished medicine without a hitch, and then got hitched to a classmate, Dr. Mita Bautinga. They went to Maryland to practice medicine, where at one time Doctor Nasi was connected with the Johns Hopkins University Hospital.

Elsewhere. This piece comes from a proud and loyal Thomasian, Philtrex, Class '53, who at one time sat at the bar of Secretary of Agriculture SOM. Gonzalez, superb ex-witch Neal B. Cruz, whose hand-holding, simple, gifted engaging, style in the organ bar keynote column "So I See It" is a favorite of the equally loyal reader of the Inquirer.

—EDMUNDO G. ESCALANTE,
retired judge, Lubao, Pampanga

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How can 6 justices dominate Supreme Court?

IN MY last 3 articles, Amando Doronila pointed out that the dependence of Chief Justice Renato Corona, along with the cabal that two other Supreme Court justices are also to be impeached, would result in a Supreme Court dominated by appointees of President Aquino.

Doronila got his math wrong: of the 15 Supreme Court justices now, only three are appointees of PNoy. Three more vacancies would raise that number to six PNoy appointees.

How then can six justices dominate a field of 15 justices voting as a collegial body? And even if the nine justices whom the majority of the Supreme Court justices would have been appointed by President Arroyo, I do not see anything wrong with that.

Unlike his predecessors, President Aquino occupies a moral high ground and does not have an agenda to protect himself and his administration from prosecution in the future.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo packed the Supreme Court with her appointees, who are led by Corona, precisely to shield herself and her allies from accountability for the plunder, electoral sabotage and corruption scandals that marred her administration.

The same cannot be said of PNoy who has no skeletons of all that in his closet in this country.

Likewise, the claim of Doronila that the Aquino administration has an extensive intelligence/surveillance network to prevent prosecution of past administration officials, is highly debatable—and, if true, it's treason against PNoy, and can be ground for in the sense of his previous articles.

I trust, Doronila cannot point to me anything right in what President Aquino is doing and he seems built here to suppress the truth and to stop anti-progress for the sake of opposing them.

Lastly, it should be said that no government program can be expected to succeed unless the machinery that has been put in place is purposive and purposeful. Graft and corruption would be disallowed first.

—ALBERT VERGARA,
bayanna.albert@gmail.com

'Sabong' approach does not help relief operations

I WRITE to clarify the statements attributed to me in the lecture-part of the Inquirer's Dec. 27 issue. There were two points attributed to me:

1. "It's obvious the main responsible accountability on this is the LGU. Every government unit and chairman has to do something they are already convening." [...]

2. "She added it was also 'common sense' that the victims should not have been in areas at risk of flooding."

I was dismissed over the phone by Leila Salaverria. The conversation centered on what the government had done by way of warning the people and I informed her that as early as 2006, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had divided the application of the city council to declare lots in five identifiable and disputable. The geohazard map was given and explained to the local government units, including the affected areas, by the DENR and the Office of Civil Defense. It was in this context that I explained that based on the local government's order and the (latest) risk-vulnerability assessment map, it was the local government unit to be responsible authority to undertake risk reduction measures. The tone of the conversation was informative rather than finger-pointing.

I appeal to the Inquirer and other media practitioners, the sabong (cockfight) approach does not help where are on the matter. If and local government are trying to this above our differences—political persuasion and alliances, government styles, development approaches—to work together and address the more pressing and difficult tasks of relief and early recovery. President Aquino has created a task force to investigate the causes of the tragedy, emphasizing that in the first quarter of 2011 he had declared several big bus. This effort builds on the climate change mitigation and adaptation plan that we created in 2009. Nothing is more helpful. If the reportage is true to balanced news and reaches it true. The research on what government has been doing before the tragedy was very thin.

Finally, I wish to correct the impression that the quote on "common sense" may have been given on a flippant statement for a very serious and sad incident. Helping people we are acknowledge and use their power to transform their families and communities is a very complex process. Therefore, it must be treated with respect.

—CORAZON ALLADO-SOLIMAN,
secretary, Department of
Social Welfare and Development

Next course of action after impeachment

IF IDOLS.LT go without saying that the appropriate criminal charges should also be filed against Chief Justice Renato Corona if and when he is convicted by the Senate on even one of the eight impeachable offenses filed against him by Congress. Full accountability calls for no less than the course of action because removal from office is not enough penalty for the crimes committed against Constitutionally guaranteed violation of the Constitution, betrayal of public trust and graft and corruption.

The charge of graft and corruption alone should bring to light some untold details about how Corona used his positions to the Arroyo administration for his personal and family's benefits, to allow.

One such case for which Corona and his wife may be held criminally accountable is the latter's appointment during the Arroyo administration as president of the government-owned corporation managing the Subic UP military recreation center Camp John Hay in Baguio.

And even should Corona decide to resign as Chief Justice before or during his trial by the Senate, government prosecutors under Justice Secretary Leila de Lima should still prosecute criminal charges against him.

And please, there should be no hospital detention for Corona like that afforded his benefactor, former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Corona is too big and burly a man to begin any silliness that may be used to keep him out of jail.

—EUGENE ORTIGAS,
jbaskert@hotmail.ph

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Lawyer asks Senate to cite House panel in contempt

By Cathy Fatmon

A MEMBER of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) has asked the Senate impeachment court to cite House prosecutors in contempt for disclosing "classified evidence" even before Chief Justice Renato Corona's trial.

Lawyer Nymundo Pefio filed an urgent motion late yesterday afternoon accusing Representatives Niel Tupas, Rodolfo Fariñas, Raul Daza and Ben Evardone of "conspiring with impunity to their relentless thirst for media exposure to destructive ends, the Chief Justice."

Pefio's charges stem from the prosecutors' interview last week at Corona Tonight, a pay-per-purchase condo in The Bellagio Towers in Taguig City by P34 million and that he had failed to disclose this purchase in his statement of assets, liabilities and net worth.

The "disclosed evidence" was supplied by the irreproachable behavior of the members and the loud content of the presentation in the impeachment case, in defiance publicly under the glaring lights of cameras their alleged "disclosed evidence to hold the accused (Corona) pinned and liable on their alleged charges."

Violation

Pefio also chided the House team led by Tupac for having "the temerity to call a press conference and display their so-called documentary evidence to poison the minds of the sovereign public."

He said this latter was a violation of Rule 18 of the impeachment rules adopted by the Senate to govern the proceedings beginning last week.

"The impudence and nervousness of Tupac and his group is unnerving, displaying and disseminating without regard and respect to the Upper Chamber of Congress sitting as Court of Impeachment under Rule XVIII of the Rules and Procedure on Impeachment. That which provides that the Presiding Officer and the members shall refrain from making comments and disclosures to public pertaining to the merits of a pending impeachment trial. It adds that the same apply to the prosecution and their respective counsel and witnesses," Pefio said.

Senators Lacy visited the House prosecutors against going against the gag rule covering the impeachment trial.

Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, Majority Leader Vicente Sotto III and Assistant Majority Leader Gregorio Honasan II said in the Senate building yesterday to inspect arrangements for the trial in the session hall.

In separate interviews, Sotto and Honasan said the Senate motion would be discussed during a caucus to be held on the first day of session proper of the impeachment court next Monday.

'Humanity'

But Sotto indicated that because Pefio was not a participant in the impeachment trial, there was a possibility that his motion would be ignored.

"He is a nonentity as far as the impeachment court is concerned. Although the Senate President said we would probably ask Representative Tupas to explain his video," Sotto said in a phone interview.

Asked for comment, Enrile said he would decide on Pefio's motion, but did not elaborate.

Honasan said the motion filed by Corona's defense lawyers earlier for a preliminary hearing to establish whether the right articles of impeachment filed against the Chief Justice had been properly verified would also be discussed during the caucus.

CORONA

Color of royalty better than 'tomato sauce' red

From page A1

time to visit their farm in the province.

Cruz admitted in a news conference yesterday that many of the senators were unhappy with the original rule which they wrote in early December last year when they were meeting as members of the impeachment court.

"I think not every body was happy with the original rules we put in them," she said.

Sen. Miriam Santiago told the lawyers then that the senators were expecting a deadline not called sandiganga, which is another court officials and lawmakers, of royalty in other parts of the world.

Also that the last minute was a classic retake to tomato sauce that San Pedro Pangilinan de scribed as "fighting red." When were, the lady rulers were a considerable to their respective parents of their brownish colors.

Even the fit of the original rules on the senators judges came at its criticism—many of the senators looked like they lacked the weight.

'Defective' complaint

Some lawmakers also complained that the lexicons "Toby" and "Boo-sanns."

Cruz said that while the new rules would have to be put very similar to the original ones, the improved version would be more precise.

"We have ordered a different set made of a different material and will be a little design," Cruz said in Filipino.

"We noted that the old ones are kind comfortable because they were too wide and the fabric was heavy. The order should be ready by Jan. 16," she added.

'Defective' complaint

Cruz said the impeachment court was expected to first rule on the motion of Corona's defense lawyers for a preliminary hearing on alleged constitutional defects of the unfiled complaint filed by 188 congressmen against the Chief Justice.

Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile has asked the prosecutors of the House of Representatives to comment on the defense panel's motion that the articles of impeachment were defective.

Corona's counsel wants the issue settled before the senator-judges proceed to try the impeached Supreme Court chief.

Cruz said a ruling on the motion was likely to be rendered shortly after Corona begins the grand opening the start of the trial at 2 p.m.

10-minutes each

Cruz said that Enrile, in presiding officer of the impeachment proceedings, had already issued an order giving the House prosecution panel and Corona's defense team 10-minutes each to raise their questions and comments.

After the opening statements, a ruling is expected to be handed down on the defense plea for preliminary hearing on the supposed defects in the unsigned impeachment complaint.

"If the motion is denied, the trial will proceed," Enrile told reporters.

If the motion is granted, the defense lawyers will be allowed to present evidence to back up their contention that the charges against Corona should be dismissed outright, Cruz said.

The Chief Justice is not required under the rules to appear in the trial. However, if he does not appear, he will be considered in contempt, Cruz said.

Corona communications group 'incommunicado'

THE OFFICE that serves as the Chief Justice Renato Corona's communications group.

The symbolic of Corona's pool of spokesperson was declared "incumbent because of Malacañang's order to stay passively cut off all phone accounts in some areas, of Manila as part of the presidential security measures for the national Black Nazarene procession.

Jose Midas Marquez, Supreme Court administrative and spokesperson, said he was supposed to talk with three lawyers who had been chosen by Corona as members of his communications team in his impeachment trial in the Senate, which begins on Jan. 16.

"I was supposed to talk to them to confirm their inclusion in the team but I cannot make even a single call," Marquez told reporters.

He said members of the team would address questions from the media concerning Corona's impeachment trial.

The Chief Justice was very careful in choosing them," Marquez said.

However, Marquez declined to name the team members pending the "receipt of media queries" from them.

According to him, Corona decided to pick "outsiders" in his spokespersons to douse speculations that he would use the resources of the judiciary in defending himself.

Marlon Ramos

House eyes CJ condo's realty firm

From page A1

luxury condominium, The Bellagio, in Bonifacio Global City in Taguig City.

Tupas and other prosecution members presented last week documents purporting to show the sale of a 383-square-meter unit with three parking slots in The Bellagio in December 2009, six months before Corona's appointment as Chief Justice by outgoing President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Tupas said he has refused to release readings or deny the report, and so Corona, who is by law a lawyer is P34 million.

The prosecutors and parking slots were sold to her much more than P26 million because there prevailing prices.

It is ridiculous, unreasonable, absurd and even downright stupid to believe that the public's hard-earned money would be used to buy a condominium complex through an unfair deal with allied corporations," Tupas said.

Asked from The Bellagio prosecutors, the House prosecutors also said Corona created a new, bedroom, 115.32-square-meter condo unit at Bonifacio Ridge, another condominium unit in Makati City, and a house and lot in Quezon City.

Jennifer Cuevas, counsel for Corona, said last week he does not prepared to disprove claims that he had illegally acquired properties.

The retired Supreme Court associate justice said the Bellagio property belonged to Corona using "hard-earned money" and that it was still being amortized.

Cuevas has dismissed the House prosecutors for resorting to "trial by publicity" by said this showed that the evidence against Corona was weak.

"They are really trying to demonize the Chief Justice," Cuevas said.

Corona's legal team has submitted it would ask the Senate to prohibit the congressmen from further discussing in the public the supposed evidence against the Chief Justice, according to Enrile.

Enrile has also issued a warning that if not the Senate rules bound senators, House prosecutors and the defense from making any comment on the case, or discussing it in public.

THE BONIFACIO Ridge condominium at Bonifacio Global City where Chief Justice Corona owns a unit.

Palace dared to look into Carpio assets

From page A1

The source, who asked not to be named to avoid reprisal, challenged Malacañang and President Aquino's allies in the House of Representatives to look into Carpio's alleged acquisition of 80/26 in Costa Street in Salcedo Village.

"If they are really after the truth, then the House and Malacañang should also look into Carpio's acquisition of the 800-square-meter property," the source said.

"If they really believe justice of the Supreme Court cannot sell, tool to buy condominium units, then they should also look into really unscrupulous in nature."

However, the source did not reveal Carpio bought the unit under his son, appointed by then Pres. Joseph Ejercito Estrada to the high tribunal in 2001.

The source also refused to go the number of Carpio but he was unavailable.

'The First'

One of the youngest appointees to the high court, Carpio was among the founding members of the influential Yellow Series, Cory Marcelo-Aquino or the office, popularly known as the "The Firm."

The law firm was provided legal services to Aquino and members of his family but later fired each other.

Carpio was said to be Corona's closest ally in the position vacated by Chief Justice Reynato Puno in May 2010.

An envoy identified as Mollo to an philanthropic court—is to some website among leading ombudsmen—also claimed that "a very reliable source reveals" that Carpio was the registered owner of the unit in Arlington Tower.

Eric Mallilo said the junior "owns and lives in an 800+ square meter luxury penthouse Condominium unit with its own private pool at the top of 44+ storey Tower in Salcedo Village, Makati."

The penny saver (Emilio Pena) Sol. Tupas and journalists Mario Bravo and Marlena Vitug Alves this box. Can they elaborate the questionable wealth of Carpio to (the) interest of (the) survey?" Mallilo said.

"This is where he just Representative Casino to plan set people power to oust Corona is acquitted by the Senate," the user added, apparently referring to Senate Pres. Juan Ponce Enrile or Cambo.

Statement of assets

Carpio, Enrile's 3rd appointee to the high court when she rose to power in 2001 during the impeachment trial of Joseph Estrada, submitted a summary of his statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN) to the anti-corruption watchdog Kaya Natin Movement for Good Governance and Ethical Leadership.

In a one-page document, Carpio placed his total net worth as 2010 at P46,344,926, with total assets of P47,269,926 and total liabilities of P75,000.

Carpio said he was also entitled to certain portions in the real properties of Bernardo D. Carpio, Sol Carpio and Leandro D. Carpio.

The justice, however, did not specify the properties he owned.

Carpio said the legal questions concerning the public declaration of SALN of judges and justices was still being studied by a special committee created by the high court.

Associate Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno, the President's first appointee to the Supreme Court, listed total assets of P25,999,810.82 and total liabilities of P155,457.17 in 2009 for a total net worth of P25,843,353.65.

In 2008, Sereno declared a total net worth of P47,792,197.26 after deducting her total liabilities of P242,242.89 from her total assets of P47,964,518.14.

Like Carpio, Sereno also did not disclose the properties she had acquired.

A SENATE employee holds up a robe originally planned to be worn during the impeachment trial of Chief Justice Corona, which will start on Jan. 16. RAFAEL ESPES

INSIDE THE ROPES Devotees jostle to hold a rope for pulling a carriage of the statue of the Black Nazarene, believed to have healing powers in the predominantly Roman Catholic country, the statue is paraded through the narrow streets of Manila's old city from morning to midnight.

Gov't agents raid houses of terror group

From page A1

accompanied on Tondo, Manila, while another was in Rizal province, Cassim said after he convened a meeting in Manila morning to go over the security and crowd-assistance plans for the daylong procession.

"There was no trace of the suspects. But we still continuing the operation," he said.

Mr. Aquino was on government radio and television on Sunday to warn devotees of the Black Nazarene to be vigilant, because terrorists may take advantage of the huge crowd in Manila to save terror.

He said that the group may resort to bombing attacks but assured the public that the government was prepared to prevent the devastation.

Interior Secretary Jesse Robredo said at the press conference that the authorities were monitoring the movements of **40 to 50 people** identified with a terror group in Mindanao.

National Security Adviser Cesar Garcia said members of the group were suspected to be "bomb experts," who had undertaken bombing activities in Mindanao.

Shut down

"They also had a history of detonating improvised explosive devices through cell phones," Garcia said in a phone interview, explaining why the Palace had asked telecommunication firms to shut off their cell phone signals along the route of the procession.

Garcia said the group, which he said could not be linked directly to the regional terror group, Jemaah Islamiah, had been spotted in Metro Manila "before Christmas."

"The suspicion is that they are still here," he said. "We can't take things for granted."

Malacañang's warning of a terror threat may not have been entirely error-off.

The Philippine Coast Guard said a "huge" package of explosives was confiscated on a bus traveling from Pasay City on Sunday.

C4, blasting caps

About 3.5 kilograms of C4, eight boxes of blasting caps, three rolls of cord and 0.75 kg of prima booster were found on Hard Bus 2028, Plate No. TYU 614. The bus was on the MV Eng. Frederick roll-on, roll-off ferry from Mindoro province.

The Department of Transportation and Communications said the bus had come from Pasay and was en route to Batangas province. The bus was intercepted by a joint security force, aided by K-9 dog handlers, of the Coast Guard and the Philippine National Police.

From Marawi

Garcia said the authorities had not determined to which group the would-be terrorists belong, but denied that they had a foreign link. He said the would-be terrorists came from Mindanao and one of them came from Marawi City.

"It could be the Sayyaf. It could be MILF [Moro Islamic Liberation Front Special Operations Group]. We cannot be conclusive at this point," he said.

Brig. Al Haq, MILF military spokesperson, said his group "vehemently denied" Garcia's insinuations.

Since August

PNP Director General Nicanor Bartolome said his men had maximized the presence in Metro Manila of its train-suspected terrorists since August last year, but the police were not alerted until the the Black Nazarene procession came up.

Bartolome said the PNP would rather not take chances with the procession, which draws millions of devotees, could be a probable terrorist target.

The PNP chief said the President was concerned about the safety of everyone after he was briefed about the threat. "The President is very particular that the celebration should be peaceful. His aim is to protect our people," he added.

Full alert

Bartolome said the PNP deployed more personnel than the 6,000 tapped last year for the procession as he placed the entire 22,000-strong National Capital Region Police Office on full alert.

The PNP also beefed up its explosive and ordnance teams, and augmented its K-9 units with the K-9 units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Coast Guard.

The AFP-National Capital Region Command was also placed on the highest red alert.

Bolinao said the decision to turn off the cell phone signals along the procession route in Manila was prompted by the possibility that a bomb attack would be triggered by a cell phone.

Intel community

He said this was a request of the intelligence community of the PNP and the AFP.

"We had been briefed by the government regarding the terrorism situation and have agreed to take certain precautionary measures to enhance public safety in and around the procession areas," it added.

Digitel Telecommunications Philippines, operator of Sun Cellular, issued a similar advisory, saying it would implement "precautionary measures to ensure public safety."

Each tower covers 2.5 to 3 kilometers, so other areas that may not be along the procession route were also likely affected, according to Sesar.

"This is an extraordinary situation ... when the President makes an announcement like that, we have to act on it," said Smart spokesperson Ramon Isberto.

National security

In a separate advisory, Ayala-led Globe Telecom said it had complied with the government's request in the interest of "national security."

"Please be informed that our link subscribers of all taken in select areas of Manila will experience temporary loss of signal due to security measures being conducted by the government," Globe said in a text message.

The company said several of its cell sites in Quiapo, Quezon Boulevard, Carriedo, portions of Divisoria, Lawton and other areas along the path of the procession were shut off between 6 a.m. and 3 a.m.

Globe spokesperson Yoly Crisanto said all mobile phone operations were required by their respective franchises to shut off their services in certain areas if ordered by the government when there are threats to national security.

"That provision is in our CPCN (certificate of public convenience and necessity)," Crisanto said. "But this is the first time we have done this for an area this big, for this long and for reasons like this," she added.

Overkill

The suspension of phone service drew criticism from consumers, who called the move "overkill and an overkill."

"Stopping all public communication facilities, especially cell phone services, open it the public's and the government's sounding board against any alleged terror threats," said Antonio Cruz, head of consumer group TulPotenz.

He said open cell phone lines would enable citizens to respond to the government's call for reports of suspicious persons and groups.

Cruz is also vital to media, whose profession relies heavily on cell phone services, to report to the public and to both private and public security personnel," he said.

The Communist Party of the Philippines also chided Malacañang for the measure. "Cutting cellular communication lines is actually a counterproductive measure as it would prevent people from rapidly transmitting information had there been an actual threat," it said.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Valte defended the move taken by the government.

"We feel that it was warranted in an additional security measure and is necessary for us to ensure that nothing untoward will happen during the period of the procession and the celebration," Valte said. With reports from Joelle Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon, and Ryan O. Rosauro, Inquirer Mindanao

DEVOTEES carry the image of the Black Nazarene before the start of the procession. The Black Nazarene procession is one of the most spectacular of religious festivals in the Philippines. Police estimated 8 million people turned up for the occasion.

A DEVOTEE cools himself during the procession. Pagasa predicted rain but Monday turned out to be a sunny day.

AFTER hours of delay, the Black Nazarene procession inches along Plaza Lawton in Manila followed by tens of thousands of devotees.

KEY HANDLE Archbishop Luis Antonio Tagle officiates at the Mass (foreshelf) to thousands of devotees before the start of the annual procession of the Black Nazarene at Quiapo Grandstand.

DEVOTEES raise their hands during the procession.

Millions defy terror alert, join procession

From page A1

cure against flooded the capital in a show of religious fervor, despite warnings that Islamic militants may be planning to bomb the spectacular annual event.

Many among the hooting, sweaty crowd risked injury by clambering over others in a bid to touch the icon and win its healing favor, while most people prayed through the slow crawl to the host at a sign of devotion.

Millions of devotees are estimated to the event every year, more so that year even after President Aquino assured us basically that authorities had uncovered a plot to attack the event, potentially with a mobile phone-triggered bomb.

Test of faith

Monsieur Schreiber, a 44-year-old warehouseman and a Black Nazarene procession participant for the past 13 years, said the looming warning was not enough to keep him away.

"I'll not allow ourselves to be scared by terrorism, it means we do not really believe in Him," said Schreiber, who insisted the icon had helped him regain the full use of his right arm after it was severely injured in a car accident.

"My son not worried (about a terrorist attack) because we have faith in Him. We are under His protection," said Wladimir Bermosino, a 42-year-old devotee who had named his daughter Nazarena in gratitude to the Black Nazarene.

"We're in Mr Ando. If it's my time to die, then that's it. People die even in their sleep, but since we are here, we might as well join the procession," said Jonathan Ramos, 39, an electrician who had been attending the procession since he was in the fourth grade.

"I've noticed that there are a lot more people now despite the news (of an alleged bomb threat)," Ramos added.

"We're long in I can walk or crawl, I will join the procession. "But in my view," 47-year-old Bayle Rosario said after robbing her pendrosari dust on the icon, hoping it would help her overcome financial problems and regain his full vision.

"Maybe the President himself interviewed it so we would be more vigilant and careful. But we will not be stopped," said Jude Irwing, 30, of Pasay City.

"We are not afraid and we are prepared for anything," added Eric Ramirez, 32.

The predominantly male and barefoot-shirted pilgrims struggled to touch the image as it inched its way from Quiapo Grandstand down its traditional route leading to Quiapo Church.

The more determined devotees jostled to get hold of the rope pulling the carriage, while others framed a handkerchief-towering mass around the image behind as "Señor Nazareno."

The usual chants of "Viva Viva!" occasionally became "Manyo dawa! (Out of the way!)" as some devotees, previously patient and jolted those who had already touched the image or had their towels dabbed on the slides to make way for the flower-ranch still awaiting their turn.

Mechanical mishap

But instead of a terrorist attack, a mechanical problem marred the procession—delaying it by several hours—when the carriage bearing the image was stalled because the wheels broke.

At first, two wheels got unhinged as the carriage was approaching F. Bagtas Street, near Manila Hotel, after leaving Quiapo Grandstand at around 9 a.m. Nine hours later, the carriage's second pair of right wheels had been damaged as the carriage neared past Manila City Hall.

"We can't do it anymore! All the wheels are gone!" one marshal yelled from atop the carriage.

One of the three thick ropes pulling the carriage also snapped, the last one loomed.

Last year, the carriage was already at Tayuman University at around 1 p.m. Now, it's already 6 p.m. and we're not yet there. Nakakaingay si Señor (It's becoming difficult for our Lord)."

The image received the first class unqualified Quiapo Church title in 1767 and 1929, the great earthquakes of 1645 and 1863, and the 1945 bombing of Manila during World War II.

Devotion to the Black Nazarene was encouraged by Pope Innocent X, who issued a papal bull establishing Cofradía de Jesus Nazareno in 1650. In the 19th century, Pope Pius VII granted indulgences to people who prayed devoutly to the Black Nazarene.

Sources: inquirer Archives, www.quiapochurch.com

IN THE KNOW

WHAT has come to be known as the feast of the Black Nazarene starts with the commemoration, the translation, or journey of the 17th century statue from its original home in Luneta to Quiapo in Manila.

The original Black Nazarene, the dark-colored image of Christ that carries the weight of a heavy cross, was made by an unknown Mexican sculptor and brought to Manila by a Recollect priest.

The icon of Nuestro Padre Jesus Jesus de Nazareno was brought by Augustinian Recollect priests to the Church of San Jose Recoletos in Bagumbayan, now part of Luneta, on May 31, 1606.

In 1606, the image was enshrined at the Quiapo Recollect church of San Nicolas de Tolentino in Intramuros. On Jan. 9, 1787, it was transferred to the church in Quiapo, where it is also known as St. John the Baptist Church after its patron saint.

Believed to be miraculous, the black Nazarene has become more famous than Quiapo's patron saint whose feast is celebrated every June 24. Devotees have attributed miracles and answered prayers to the Black Nazarene.

Economy last year not fun to many, says Pulse Asia

From page A1

come or worse now?" Pulse Asia asked 1,200 Filipino adults nationwide between Nov. 14 and Nov. 21, 2011.

Thirty-five percent of the respondents said they believed that nothing changed in the past 12 months, according to the survey. Another 34 percent said they believed that nothing changed but was a positive thing.

Those who said that nothing changed consisted of big plurality to small majorities (46 percent to 32 percent) in Metro Manila, Luzon outside Manila, the Visayas and Class E.

Close to half of those from Class ABC (47 percent) and D (43 percent) believed that the economy stagnated. But in Mindanao, more than half of the respondents (57 percent) said that the economy turned for the worse—a view shared by 38 percent in both Classes ABC and E.

Stimulus package

Reacting to the results of the survey, Malacañang said it was working to improve the country's economic conditions.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail "Abbi" Valte said the Palace would like to see those numbers go down which is why, we've hit the ground running in 2012."

She was referring to the P72-billion stimulus package that President Aquino released in October last year to step up government spending and perk up the economy.

The government did both in spending its money during the first half of last year because it was scrutinizing government projects that were conducted during the Arroyo administration.

Strongly felt

Among those who believed that the economy deteriorated, 66 percent said they "strongly felt" it, an experience shared by a majority across all geographic areas (56 percent to 74 percent) and socioeconomic classes (65 percent to 72 percent).

At the national level, 26 percent were "somewhat" affected, and 3 percent did not feel it at all.

Of those who said the economy improved, 40 percent said they "somewhat" felt it, 36 percent said they "strongly felt" it, an experience shared by a majority across all geographic areas (56 percent to 74 percent) and socioeconomic classes (65 percent to 72 percent).

At the national level, 26 percent were "somewhat" affected, and 3 percent did not feel it at all.

Of those who said the economy improved, 40 percent said they "somewhat" felt

Editor Teddyboy S. Molondres
Assistant Editor Francis T.I. Ochoa

SPORTS

Cabagnot seals 2-1 Petron lead

Guiao fined P80,000

By Jean Marasigan

JAPETH Aguilar of Talk 'N Text rises to reject the layup of Petron's Alex Cabagnot.

NETTING three-pointers in the clutch of time has become quite customary for Alex Cabagnot.

Cabagnot notched a long three with 12.9 seconds remaining to Petron repulsed Talk 'N Text, 95-91, to gain a 2-1 lead in their best-of-seven PBA Philippine Cup semifinal series last night at the Cuneta Astrodome.

With the shot clock winding down and the Tropang Texters clinging to a two-point lead, Danny Ildefonso kicked it out to a waiting Cabagnot at the top of the arc for the three that completed the Boosters' rise from 22 points down.

"It was pure luck," said the down-to-earth Cabagnot, who also pulled off a similar feat last month at Batangas City Coliseum's expense.

Cabagnot's heroics preserved a brilliant night for Dorsett Miranda, who had 12 of his 20 points in the fourth period that energized the Boosters from a 10-less third quarter.

Miranda opened the fourth with back-to-back threes and anchored a 14-2 run that leveled the count at 91, 2:24 remaining.

The Boosters missed three opportunities to grab the lead, allowing the Tropang Texters to gain the edge, 93-91, on Ali Peek's free throws.

Petron coach Siot Aganito drew up one last play with Arwind Santos forced to give it up to Ildefonso, who passed off to Cabagnot for the triple that sailed above the outstretched arms of Ryan Reyes.

Game 4 is scheduled tomorrow against officiating after Game 2—was hardly bothered.

Commissioner Chito Salud slapped a fine of P80,000 for Guiao's ninth technical foul of the conference for using profane language during a heated stretch in the game and an additional P50,000 for "issuing statements to the press that are deemed prejudicial and inimical to the best interest of the league."

Salud said he didn't find any sufficient ground that collaborating had been unfair to the Elasto Painters in Game 2 which Powerade won, 121-113, on double overtime.

The scores:

PETRON 95—Cabagnot 25, Miranda 20, Ildefonso 13, Lingcop 9, Cruz 7, Ilagan 6, Yeo 5, Ibanes 4, Ayaay 3, Lapeña 3.

TALK 'N TEXT 91—De Ocampo 22, Aguilar 12, Asoro 11, Reyes 10, Wilson 9, Dario 8, Tenorio 7, Peek 6, Ilisan 5.

Quarters: 18-31, 39-48, 57-71, 91-91

Training camp set for Azkals in Dubai

By Cedrik F. Tapao

LOOKING to get the best possible preparation for the AFC Challenge Cup, the Philippine Azkals will undergo a 12-day training camp highlighted by four matches against Japanese clubs in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The camp will run from Feb. 3 to 17 and Azkals coach Michael Weiss hopes majority of the players based overseas will be able to participate in the workouts.

Coleiro's remains an issue for Weiss, who has had to deal with players arriving a day or two before matches or they are tied up with their respective clubs in Europe.

Among those who are still doubtful for the Challenge Cup from March 9 to 13 in Nepal because of club commitments are Stephan Schrock, Neil Etheridge, Paul Mulders, Jerry Lucena and Dennis Cagara.

"I hope I can put the pieces of the puzzle together, so to speak," Weiss said. "We always talk of cohesion and you cannot jell, if you don't play together. When we have our best players together, we are strong."

Bahrain was also considered as a possible site for the camp as it offered free accommodation and transportation, but manager Dan Delaney said Dubai also struck the same deal.

Weiss said the itinerary in Dubai includes matches against two first division clubs, including Al Ain. A match with the Australian Under-23 team is also part of the schedule.

A match against the Qatar Under-23 team in Doha is also being marked on.

"This is the next step for Philippine football (playing against strong teams overseas). What's important is that our local boys – the pillars of the team—have very high level matches during the camp," said Weiss.

Meanwhile, Philippine Olympic Committee chair Monico Puentevella has been appointed to the marketing and television committee of the International Football Federation (Fifa).

The appointment is the second for Puentevella in Fifa, he was also part of the football body's powerful media committee.

ANUM Who's next?

Arum, Pacquiao meet to pick next foe

By Ray Luarca

MANNY Pacquiao's next opponent will finally be known with the arrival of promoter Bob Arum in the country today.

The 80-year-old boxing Hall of Famer, who flies in early this morning, is to confer with Pacquiao regarding his preference for his next bar-when he returns to the ring this year.

Before his departure in the United States, Arum tarried off Juan Manuel Marquez, Miguel Cotto, Timothy Bradley and Lamont Peterson as the leading candidates to challenge Pacquiao.

This despite Floyd Mayweather Jr. getting a reprieve in serving his three-month prison term. Originally ordered to serve time starting Jan. 6, Mayweather was allowed to serve it from June 1 instead, clearing the way for the unbeaten American's planned May 5 bout against an undisclosed opponent in Las Vegas.

While Pacquiao wants to fight Mayweather in a clash whom he is expected to earn at least $50 million, Arum deals the latter is not feasible for May 5, as said he wanted Pacquiao's next fight to be held either on June 9 or June 16.

Lawyer Franklin Gacal, Pacquiao's chief of staff in Congress, told the Inquirer that the meeting between Arum and the Sarangani representative will take place in Manila.

The Top Rank boss will present the options and financial considerations regarding each matchup to Pacquiao.

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PH LADIES OPEN

Thai seeks repeat win

YUPAPORN

YUPAPORN Kaweekaboon will head the talent-laden Thailand contingent vying in this week's Philippine Ladies Open Championship, which tee off the 2007 against a field headlined by the country's aces.

Yupaporn beat Malaysian Azuil Jr. Isaul Abu Bakar by two strokes to pocket the title at The Country Club layout five years ago, securing what was only the second PH Ladies Open title for Thailand.

But the two-time campaigner fares a stiff challenge in the tournament unfolding tomorrow at Mimi Wadi's East course with youngsters Pamela Lomboneravong and top Jungolfers Jazmine Thavong and Pathumrapee Achyuthanon also contending for the title.

Pramdit is turning off a silver medal finish in last November's Southeast Asian Games in Indonesia. She also bagged the gold in last year's Asian Cup in Hong Kong, edging Jamie Anduza by one stroke and beating Thailand's come-from-behind win over the Philippines in team play.

Malaysia, on the other hand, will be led by Annie Hong, Sharon Poh and Syrilda Isa.

Also in the fold are Sarah Kiawasan, Lee Aning-hua and Soo Yet-kwan, Beaks Kho and Mika Bulseco of Japan, Sweden Ebere Hendrix and Nayuna Bjorklund, Australian Priscilla Keogh, Maureen Siljeof of the Netherlands and Leander Acosta of the United States.

The organizing Pioneer's Golf Association of the Philippines will host a cocktail among participants and officials today at the Wack Wack clubhouse immediately after the traditional 4 p.m. ceremonial tee-off.

La Salle volleybelles sweep elims

By Jasmine W. Payo

LA SALLE completed a first-round sweep of the UAAP women's volleyball tournament by rallying past University of Santo Tomas, 20-25, 25-22, 26-25, 25-19, 17-15, to a rematch of last season's finals over the weekend at the FEUD Flying V Arena in San Juan.

The Lady Archers rallied from a 1-7 deficit in the deciding fifth set behind Abigail Maraño, Cha Cruz and Michelle Gumabao to nail their seventh straight victory.

"I did had a more polished game in their blocking, reception and floor defense, but the positive thing that happened here was our players had a good mind and disciplined heart," said coach Ramil de Jesus of the Lady Archers, who are battling for back-to-back crowns.

The loss pushed the Tigresses down to 4-3 behind Ateneo (5-1) and Adamson (4-2).

In the other seniors's duel last Sunday, University of the East ended a three-game skid with a 13-25, 25-19, 27-25, 23-14 victory over the University of the Philippines for a 2-7 card.

Stags Run fund-raiser Jan. 15

HIGHLIGHTING of the 2nd Stags Run 2012 dubbed "Takbo para sa Sibol-Mayon" scheduled Jan. 15 at the Ayala Center near the Mall of Asia and Bicentennial Boulevard hopes to generate funds to sustain San Sebastian College's operations mission not just in Mint Africa but also in a remote barangay in Palawan.

"Our hope is get every runners born to feed our educational ministry," said San Sebastian president Fr. Anthony Murillo, OSP.

San Sebastian has charitable and education missions in both Mount Lesan in Mint Africa and in Cuyo Island in Palawan.

Stags City Mayor Antonio "Tony" Tallon will be a guest in the race that coincides with the school's 55th founding year.

The maiden edition of the run drew about 5,000 runners.

"We hope to attract more participants this last year," said Fr. Christopher Rhoyces, OAR, who heads the event's organizing committee.

Runners may register at Cubo Sports store, SM Mall of Asia, Glorietta, SM Manila, BOS in Taguig City and San Sebastian's Recto campus in Manila. Top honors will depend in 3K, 5K and 10K races. Registration fee is P500.

IAN SANGALANG of NLEX emerges crowds dun-off Rodney Brondial of Freego

Freego whips RnW, seals quarterfinal bonus

By Jasmine M. Payo

ITS OUTRIGHT bid for a semifinal game, Freego Jeans seeded for the next best thing by finishing fifth in the PBA Phone Pals, 95-85, to nail the quarterfinal berth in the 38th Governors Cup yesterday at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Alex Nieto buried 11 of his team-high 17 points in the first half as the Jeans Makers (7-3) pulled off the near-hopeless win this season and secured the twice-to-beat advantage in the quarterfinals reserved for the third and fourth placers at the end of the elimination round.

"We learned our lesson against Café France and refocused on our defense," said coach Leo Austria after the Asia Alvarez Makers rebounded from the surprise loss that sent league leaders Coleman Devil Bet (8-1) and NLEX (7-1) to the semifinals straight.

"We had a chance at the top two, but at least now we're assured of the No. 3 position," said Austria.

In the other game, Ebenhan Enguio fired 19 points as Cebuana Energy Drink ended its campaign with a 72-63 win over the skidding Blackwater.

The 39-point Freego blowout was the biggest by a team this season since defending champion NLEX secured their Undressed by 35 points, 97-62, last month.

Despite the loss, the Road Warriors remained in the quarterfinal race with idle TC Gilmore and Rooney Rain at 4-5.

Blackwater absorbed its 38th straight loss after a 3-0 start and must win its remaining game to stay in the quarterfinal hunt.

JAMES YOUNG
Chevalier Open
12 m – Early bidder
for 12 GR Nobles
7 p.m. – Primary
Rate with Alfonso

Novak, Carol picked No. 1 Aussie seeds

MELBOURNE—Australian Open organizers have stuck with convention and kept the seedings for the season's first major in line with WTA and ATP rankings, meaning Caroline Wozniacki will be top-seeded in the women's draw even if she loses top spot to Petra Kvitova at the Sydney International this week.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic is seeded No. 1 in the men's draw. He is followed by 2009 champion Rafael Nadal, four-time champion Roger Federer and Andy Murray, who has lost the past two finals at the Australian Open. Of the top 32 men, only Robin Soderling and Mardy Fish are absent.

Wozniacki's champion Kvitova is one more from No. 2 in No. 3 in the seedings for Monday the Sydney International—where nine of the top 10 women are playing, including Wozniacki...but not late to allow Australian Open seedings list. All the top 32 women have entered the Melbourne draw.

Defending women's champion Kim Clijsters (hip) and 2010 champion Svetlana Williams (left ankle) sustained injuries during the Brisbane International last week, but both are expected to play.

Clijsters is seeded No. 12, one spot above Williams, who was unable to defend her Australian title last year due to prolonged injury.

Williams has lost only twice at Melbourne Park since winning the title in 2010—missing tournaments in 2008 and 2011 and winning the title five times.

In Sydney, US Open champion Sam Stosur was humbled out in the first round of the Sydney International by a 6-2, 6-4 loss to Francesca Schiavone. AP

SACRAMENTO Kings' Jason Thompson makes a reverse dun during clash match against the Orlando Magic.

Thunder notch third triumph in three nights

OKLAHOMA CITY—Oklahoma City Thunder became the first NBA team to win three games on consecutive nights this season by beating the San Antonio Spurs, 108-96, on Sunday.

Kevin Durant had 21 points and 10 rebounds. He needed only three more points in record his first career triple-double but instead sat out the entire fourth quarter with the rest of Oklahoma City's starters. The Thunder were able to coast to the finish after outscoring the Spurs, 37-21, in the third.

Reserve James Harden scored 20 for the Thunder.

Gary Neal scored 18 to lead the Spurs, who played without point guard Tony Parker from midway through the third quarter. A team spokesman said Parker was fine and would have played.

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored 16 points as Los Angeles struggled past Memphis to notch its sixth consecutive home win, 98-82.

Andrew Bynum had 15 points and 15 rebounds for the Lakers, who committed a season-seven 27 turnovers and never pulled away from the injury-depleted Grizzlies.

Rudy Gay scored 39 points to lead five players in double figures for Memphis, which scrapped up a three-game road trip with an unimpressive fourth quarter.

In Portland, LaMarcus Aldridge had 30 points and eight rebounds as Portland overcame a slow start to pull away from Cleveland, 98-78. Wesley Matthews added 24 points for the Trail Blazers.

Kyrie Irving, the top pick in last June's draft, had 21 points...13 in the third quarter to lead Cleveland, which allowed the Trail Blazers to have 22 fastbreak points.

In Sacramento, Orlando beat Sacramento, 104-97, despite playing much of the game without foul-plagued Dwight Howard.

The All-Star center spent most of the first three quarters in foul trouble. He didn't get his first rebound until 4 minutes into the fourth and was scoreless before converting a three-point play with 8:33 remaining, putting the Magic ahead 97-85.

Jason Richardson scored a season-high 22 points, and Glen Davis added a season-best 20 for Orlando.

Tyreke Evans had a season-high 26 points and eight assists for the Kings. AP

OTHER RESULTS: Phoenix 108, Milwaukee 88; Minnesota 88, Washington 87

Christmas surprise from a genuine sportsman

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

YOUNG lover on born in autumn, executed a younger, many-eyed Percy Della during a lap-sleepover in the old Year of 2010.

Percy once looks in the bags and boxes of his son, wonderful grandchildren in Sacramento, California, from where he sends a weekly column for the big-one sports section.

In my case, love came from the most unexpected place, the big locker (named Simon Ateneo Coliseum), which I have always associated with classic but restless sporting events, like Gabriel Flores's unconscious of the world junior lightweight boxing crown in March 1960 and the historic Thrilla in Manila between the late Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali in October 1975.

Last Tuesday, Jan. 3, my younger boy Sebastian was wearing his two hats, Grey and Cubs, into taking them out to watch the final show of the Disney on Ice at the Big Dome.

Bacse had his hunch...the team could all be sold out, going by the impact of the shows on the holiday crowd.

Still, he took his chance, praying along the way they would not be turned away.

* * *

Year enough, all seats had been sold out.

He sent me an urgent message, and I got in touch with the ever-reliable Nena Olano.

She agreed to help out, even as time was fast running out.

I myself felt desperate, knowing how deeply Basta loves the kids.

How he wished they had come a few days ahead, but he had many commitments with his celebrated children's choir in Mandaluyong.

In desperation, Basta had thought of turning to the scalpers.

There was none in the area outside the ball game.

* * *

Refusing to give up, I texted Mr. Olano a second time.

She texted back asked me to wait a couple of minutes.

I had no choice but to wait as her save reply: Everything OK, she said. The tickets, the father, and the doting grandma, my dear boys, were immediately accommodated.

And at the exclusive patron section at that.

So, love came from the most unexpected place.

But not from the most unexpected source.

When they came home, my wife excitedly reported that the tickets to the show were provided by Nene Antares himself.

I was in a loss. I just saw and had a drink with Mr. Nene, a genuine sportsman who has been my idol since high school, in 2008 pa, during cocktails for the reunion of the world famous Ateneo Blue Eagles celebrations.

Knowing Mr. Antares, he would send me to mentioning his generosity of kindness.

Sorry, but he had just completed for my grandkids, their grandma included, their happiest...cost memorable Christmas ever.

* * *

By the way, Nene Antares is also set to present an offering, a gift of a sporting spectacle, for the wondrous cockfight aficionados hereabouts and around the world.

The Philippines stands as the undisputed cockfighting center of the planet and the World Slasher Cup staged at the Araneta Coliseum in early October is widely regarded as the "Olympics of Cockfighting" (See accompanying story below.)

Paragua, Bitoon up; Gomez gets waylaid

FILIPINO Grandmasters Mark Paragua and Richard Bitoon bested their Indian opponents in the seventh round of the MSIF Rilife 6th Chennai Open Grand Master Chess Tournament on Monday in Chennai, India.

Paragua toppled Sawalgyal Srivastava while Bitoon routed Hemant Sharma to catch up with companion GM John Paul Gomez in the 11-round Swiss System event.

Bitoon yielded to Indian International Master Karthikeyan and remained at 5.0 points in the company of Paragua, Bitoon and 20 others.

Karthikeyan eased his total to 6 points, the same output of GM Hoang Thanh Trang of Hungary. Wu Qun and Jung Chongsheng of China.

Top seed GM Alekej Aleksandrov of Belarus and Ye Rujiyuan of China drained the lead with 6.5 points each. Aleksandrov downed Indian IM Vaibhav Suri while Rujiyuan shocked Ukrainian GM Mikhailo Oleksievich.

Another Filipino, GM Oliver Barbosa, split the point with Indian Pradeep Kumar and was lodged at 4.5 points.

In the eighth round, Gomez bumped Indian Fide Master Rajesh. Bitoon will tackle Indian IM Krnjevol Ravirajwarng, and Paragua will tackle Brazilian IM Christian Rodes Toth. Barbosa will try to stay in contention when he tangles with Indian Candidate Master Prince Raop.

Race 1—(Two to Solo)—For the Safest (8). Field Pure (10). Hope You (11). Magical Stars (12)

Race 2—(Get To—The Most Able). Laughter (2). Invasion (3). Nancy and Any Moon (5)

Race 3—(Pedal Go To)—Charming Joe (2). Lilac's Prime (3). Pay-ing Home (7). I Am For Real (11). Tumbling Mountain (12)

Race 4—(Pedal Go To)—Lucky's (4). Silent Play (5). Kiss Pop (8). Mr. Secret Treasure (9). Flame (10).

Race 5—(Two to Solo)—For the Safest (8). Field Pure (10). Hope You (11). Magical Stars (12)

Race 6—(Get To—The Most Able). Laughter (2). Invasion (3). Nancy and Any Moon (5)

Race 7—(Pedal Go To)—Charming Joe (2). Lilac's Prime (3). Pay-ing Home (7). I Am For Real (11). Tumbling Mountain (12)

Race 8—(Pedal Go To)—Lucky's (4). Silent Play (5). Kiss Pop (8). Mr. Secret Treasure (9). Flame (10).

50th World Slasher Cup expecting record field

A RECORD field is expected when the 50th edition of the World Slasher Cup (WSC) kicks off Jan. 18 at the Smart Araneta Coliseum.

Widely considered as the Olympics of cockfighting, the weeklong event is expected to lure more than 300 roosters for the first time since Boni Aranda organized the event in 1962.

Organizers have seen a spike in the number of entries for the past few years starting in 2009 with 287 participants. Last year, 274 signed up for the WSC capped by Patrick Antonio of Pangasinan 8-36.

WSC-1 champion Sky Blazers, Sky Jinc and Ito Ynares and Rikki Boys will lead the local cast while among the foreign competitors are Ropie Roberts, Ike Alexander, Bill Greco, Larry Hamers, Jason Campbell, Rodney Linningham, Jorge Gorito and Dennis Antwerp.

The two-cock semifinals for Group A is on Jan. 16 and June 18 for Group B. The 5-cock finals for Group A is on Jan. 21 and Jan. 22 for Group B.

NCA-World C'ship Derby unfurls today at Ynares

THE THREE-DAY World Championship Derby of the National Cockers Alliance (NCA) opens today at the Ynares Sports Arena.

The NCA-WCD, known as the Olympics of cockfighting, will feature a one-sided rivalry of Americans and Filipinos participants.

The NCA has invited top American breeders Bugsy Roberts, Tom Pillion, Damon Volkman, George Torres, Richard Williams and Jaime Cervantes.

Included in the impressive game list are, among others, Gary Mike Hernandez, Ge Nestor Gualberto, Larry Mendoza and Casting Dapat, Boy Tandoc, Ricky Magnum, Henry Tan, Wally Salud Mayor Jun Diamante, Danny Mendoza, Rebel Roxas, Atty. Ryong Garte, Danny Soriano and Magno Lim, Jerry Pestitel and a Sibsian.

Other fight dates are Jan. 12 and 14.

PSA Forum guests: Patriots owner, Azkals manager

AZKALS-Philippine Patriots owner Mikee Romero and Philippine Azkals manager Dan Palami take centerstage today in the first session of the PSA Forum live 10:30 at Shakey's U.N. Ave. in Manila.

Romero, accompanied by team manager Eric Arcega, coach Gene Gonzales and two players, will discuss the plans of the Patriots in the third season of the ASEAN Basketball League (ABL), while Palami will talk about the match jitters the Azkals against Bahrain 1-0 from South Korea in 0-1 League at the Rizal Memorial football stadium.

Philippine Football Federation president Nonong Araneta, coach football legend Rinus Michels and Philippine Olympian of the Philippine Sports Commission are also expecting in the Forum aired live over DZSR Sports Radio 918 and presented by Smart, Pepsi, Rebisol Battery and Shakey's. In behalf of the national beach volleyball championships in Boracay.

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DID YOU KNOW

FROM April to September 2010, around 3.4 million domestic visitors traveled to the National Capital Region mainly for pleasure or vacation, according to the 2010 Household Survey on Domestic Visitors — Cohairi Gonzales, Inquirer Research

Toxic fumes lead to school's closure

Students, teachers complain of difficulty in breathing

By Miko Morales

A PUBLIC high school in Pasay City suspended all classes yesterday morning after its students, teachers and employees experienced difficulty in breathing due to what a fire official described as a suspected chemical leak coming from either the airport or an industrial facility.

"Our team of arson investigators is still analyzing the potential source of the scent," Pasay fire marshal, Chief Insp. Douglas Guiyab, said in a phone interview.

"What we are certain about the case is that the fumes came from the school through the air vents blown from the northwest," he added.

Guiyab described the scent as being similar to "freshly laid asphalt."

Jovani Lee, an emergency medical technician from the city government's rescue team, was among the first to rush to Rabanco National High School in Barangay 201 after receiving calls for assistance.

She said she attended to more than 60 students and teachers whose chief complaint was difficulty in breathing.

According to Lee, a noxious odor permeated the five-story building, which made it hard for everyone to breathe.

Odor strong on 5th floor

The odious smell was particularly strong on the fifth floor, she told the Inquirer on the phone.

The situation prompted the school principal to call off all classes at a little past 7 a.m.

Asked about the potential sources of the chemical leak, Guiyab said investigators were looking into two possibilities...a nearby tobacco facility operated by La Suerte Cigar or the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

The tobacco facility is about a kilometer away from the school and the airport half a kilometer away.

Guiyab said that they would only be able to determine the type of chemical once they trace the source of the noxious fumes.

Investigators, however, were having difficulty because of its concentration.

Guiyab added that he wasn't sure whether the school would resume classes today because "the scent comes and goes as we are uncertain about the situation (on Tuesday)."

However, he posted a monitoring team to observe the situation overnight to help school administrators, as well as the local fire department, in tracing the source of the suspected chemical leak at the earliest possible time.

FEAST DAY CELEBRATION
Fireworks lights up the sky during a down Pfiesta at Rizal Park in Manila to celebrate the feast of the Black Nazarene. Millions of devotees took part in the annual procession despite warnings about a possible terror attack. —

Court issues 3-day TRO vs Echiverri suspension order

SUPPORTERS of Caloocan City Mayor Recto Echiverri occupy the front of the City Hall as Caloocan Regional Trial Court Branch 128 issues a temporary restraining order against the Department of Interior and Local Government and Vice Mayor Edgar Erice effectively stopping them from executing the preventive suspension order against Echiverri on Monday. INQUIRER.net PHOTO

By Kristine Felicia Pangonay

THE CALOOCAN City Regional Trial Court issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) Monday stopping the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) from implementing a 60-month preventive suspension order against Mayor Recto Echiverri, City Treasurer Rodino Gacura, Budget Officer Jessua Garcia and City Accountant Ellen Cayanan.

The DILG was scheduled to implement the order on the same day against the city officials who are accused of just recalculating more than P300 million of city hall employees' earnings, now in the Government Service Insurance System.

The complaint was filed by Vice Mayor Edgar Erice.

Relief

Although Echiverri, Gacura, Garcia and Cayanan managed to seek temporary relief from the Caloocan City Hall, where employees are holding a 40-day protest rally against Mayor Recto Echiverri, City Treasurer Rodino Gacura, Budget Officer Jessua Garcia and City Accountant Ellen Cayanan.

The DILG was scheduled to implement the order on the same day against the city officials who are accused of just recalculating more than P300 million of city hall employees' earnings, now in the Government Service Insurance System.

Echiverri, however, was not present when the announcement was made.

The TRO was issued by Executive Judge Eleanor Bueng in response to a declaratory relief with prayer for temporary restraining order and/or writ of preliminary injunction Echiverri's camp filed early Monday.

Preventive

The TRO was given hours after Interior Secretary Jesse Robredo reportedly signed the preventive order.

In the writ reviewed by the Inquirer, Abueg said the TRO was issued "to maintain public order" and prevent "unwarranted violence or chaos" between the supporters of the mayor and the vice mayor who had set up barricades around city hall.

Bueng said the order was "not intended to subvert" the ruling of the appellate court.

Status quo

"... It is crucial for the purpose of preserving the status quo ante pending resolution of the petitioners' motion for reconsideration thereto," the order read.

A separate motion by respondents-sans was filed by Echiverri's camp in the court of opposite Jose Feliciano Abueg, Mrs. Liz, Echiverri's legal counsel, had said the suspension order could not be served until the motion had been acted upon.

The Ugly American

ON TARGET
ANTHONY ESPINA

A BORDER-American who holds a top position at the US Embassy showed favoritism as a young Filipino woman, whom he wrongly bumped with his car last Friday.

Brian J. Chang, the American Embassy's second secretary, raised Princess Cordova, 22, after he got out of his Toyota Fortuner car with a license-holding woman, apparently his wife.

"Maybe a bird, you're a bird!" Chang was heard shouting at the shocked Cordova after she was crossing the driveway of a Korean restaurant on Jupiter Street, Barangay Bel-Air, Makati City.

Chang said his wife were supposedly to catch a lunch to get into a Korean restaurant and security personnel Cordova, who was also entering the same restaurant with a female friend.

When Cordova told her sister, Dindo Dimas, an advertising executive, about the incident outside which Chang knew told her to go to Chang's table to apologize.

Dimas, who was waiting for Cordova inside the restaurant, told his sister she was probably in trouble and that's why the man was angry.

Even if she knew she was not, Cordova went before obeyed Dimas and went to Chang to apologize.

She got another mouthful from a man who's supposed to act like a gentleman since he's a diplomat.

"Sorry man I'll tell you even if you get in my way!" Chang shouted at Cordova.

When Gamo protested the double treatment he once got from the Korean-American, Chang reportedly challenged him to a fight.

"You wanna square off with me?" Chang said.

Dimas called the police.

Chang was arrogant with responding policemen. He wouldn't show his ID, his gun or his name and his position at the US Embassy.

Chang's identity was confirmed when the head of the responding team, Insp. Kito Ramos, checked with the US Embassy through the numbers Chang gave him.

Ramos told Dimas they couldn't hold Chang as he has diplomatic immunity.

Dimas called this columnist who asked to talk to Ramos.

I said that Ramos could hold Chang for a while until more

(Turn to page 2)

time a ranking US diplomat quarreled with a Filipino outside the embassy grounds, and a young woman is at that.

At the risk of generalizing, to Koreans, because of Chang's first name, most men have a very low regard for women.

A joke goes that during the Korean War, an American soldier at a checkpoint noticed a man walking some chickens followed his wife.

When the American GI asked the Korean man why he walked far behind his wife, the Korean said: "She may on land mines, no safe."

* * *

Chang is not alone.

The US ambassador, Harry Thomas, is no different from his predecessor, Kristie Kenney.

We once said that foreign nations came to Manila for sex.

Three "diplomats" zeroed in of the 1960s movie, "The Ugly Americans," based on a novel by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer about Americans in Southeast Asia.

You are referring to three books, but their characters

A MAN receives his relatives, 19-year-old Robee Sacrillon, who was killed in a hit-and-run accident on Ortigas Avenue Extension in Pasig City. MIKKO ASENCIO

Pasig hit-and-run mishap leaves 18-year-old dead

By Nina Calleja

AN 18-YEAR-OLD pedestrian was killed in a hit-and-run accident before dawn yesterday in Pasig City.

The victim, who was identified as Robee Sombrero Jr., a resident of Cainta, Rizal, was pronounced dead on arrival at Pasig City General Hospital.

Chief Inspector Fiji Christopher Tambaan said the police received a call at around 2:20 a.m. about a hit-and-run victim on Ortigas Avenue Extension in Barangay Rosario, Pasig City.

Tambaan was crossing the street when a speeding sport utility vehicle (SUV) hit him. Bleeding him, fatally, several meters away from the point of impact.

It was the injury to the victim's head which caused his immediate death, Mikmer said.

The driver of the SUV did not stop and sped away. Sombrero was taken to the hospital by traffic enforcers who happened to be near.

PO3 Gaby Cajipulo of the Eastern Police District public information office said witnesses were not able to describe the SUV or even note its plate number, making it difficult for police to track down the reliable's owner.

Truck with ₱2-M cargo stolen from firm's parking lot

By Julie M. Aurelio

A DELIVERY truck carrying P2 million worth of lighting fixtures has been reported stolen from the company's parking lot in Quezon City.

The theft of the truck owned by Mint Corp. was discovered by the firm's workers at around 6:30 p.m. on Saturday.

Before it was stolen, the truck (plate number XRD-792) had been left along with 14 others in the company's parking area in the corner of Agoncillo and Bayani Streets in Bgy. Paligsahan, Quezon City.

Chief of the Quezon City Police District's anti-car theft unit, said the company's operations manager, Harry Pua, told them that the truck contained P2 million worth of lighting fixtures.

The Inquirer scheduled to deliver the cargo to a department store in Pasig City on Sunday.

A check of the fixtures taken by the Eastern's circuit intersection camera showed the truck being maneuvered out of the parking lot.

However, it did not show who or how many people were involved in the theft which the police suspect could be an inside job.

Unit said the operations man ager told him that the truck's gas tion key was broken. As a result, any key could be used to start the engine. In addition, there was no alarm system in the firm's warehouse door lock was also broken.

Police speculated that the theft may have occurred after the guards on duty the day shift left and before the guards on the night shift took over.

Girl with leukemia needs ₱183,000 for chemotherapy

By Santiago B. Alvarenga

IN 2008, six-year-old Arielle Gayon was diagnosed by doctors at Philippine Children's Medical Center to be suffering from acute lymphocytic leukemia.

GAYON

Their promptly prescribed that the young girl undergo 12 cycles of chemotherapy so that she would have a fighting chance against the disease.

On Jan. 20, Arielle will undergo her 19th chemotherapy session. Each one costs P11,000, each. The last three are critical, according to her doctors, because these may prolong her life by several years.

"It's quite difficult to accept that I have a sick child but we have to keep on looking for kind people who may see will be saved," the P150,000 for her chemotherapy sessions," her mother, Rowena Gayon, told the Inquirer in Filipino over the phone recently.

"I hope that your readers will help us extend the life of my daughter. As a parent, I want to see her live a full life," she said.

Gayon's can be reminded at 0015-6057934. Donations can be deposited in her Bank of the Philippine Islands bank account number 0429-1140301.

Burger joint crew member killed while walking home

By Julie M. Aurelio

A TEENAGER working for a fast-food chain of restaurants was gunned down before dawn yesterday as he was walking home from work.

The victim, 19-year-old Jonathan Lara, died on the spot of a gunshot wound in the head. He was a crew member of a branch of a restaurant in Ali Mall, a shopping mall in Cubao, Quezon City.

Insp. Elmer Monzolin, homicide investigation chief of the Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit, said the teenager was killed in his neighborhood.

A check of the footage taken by a closed circuit television camera installed near the crime scene showed the victim's killer as a man who rode a motorcycle without a helmet.

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Antipolo City sets ₱200-M target for registering firms

By Nina Calleja

THE CITY of Antipolo expects business to be held this year with its business permits and licensing office (BPLO) projected to earn P200 million this year, according to an official.

The projection was made after the Antipolo City Council passed and approved an ordinance that would streamline the city's BPLO.

Some of the office under the city mayor to a department with a definite organization structure.

"We had a modest collection of P186 million from 18,000 registered businesses last year. This year, we have a goal of P200 million," BPLO chief Salvador Blanquisa said in a statement.

He added that his office has been busy accommodating all taxpayers who are required to renew their business permits from Jan. 2 to 20.

"For an efficient and speedy registration, we have implemented strategies such as the Business One Stop Shop or BOSS program which ensures that all business enterprises in the city are registered or their renewals renewed," Blanquisa said.

Iran trumpets nuke ability at underground lab

CAIRO — Iran's top nuclear official announced this weekend that the country was on the verge of starting production at its second major uranium enrichment site, on a defiant declaration that its nuclear program would continue despite severe international sanctions restricting its oil revenue.

The announcement, made through official news media reports, came after a week of escalating confrontation between Washington and Tehran, including a threat that Iran would respond with military force if the United States tried to send an aircraft carrier strike group back into the Strait of Hormuz.

The imminent opening of the uranium-enrichment site — the Fordo plant, near the city of Qum — confronts the United States and its allies with difficult choices about how far to go to limit Iran's nuclear abilities. The new facility is buried deep underground as a well-dispersed military site and is considered by Israel and some American officials to be more resistant than the existing enrichment site at Natanz, fueling what Israeli officials, in particular, consider an important deterrent to Iran's nuclear arms.

Fifteen the centrifuges at the Qum facility was first disclosed by President Barack Obama and his counterparts in France and Britain in the fall of 2009. Officials expressed doubts that Iran would ever go forward with the facility. But once it goes into operation, the chances of disabling it, in the words of one former top Israeli official, "is unimaginably domestically."

The declaration that the facility was nearly ready came in an interview on Saturday with Fereydoun Abbasi, who was made the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization shortly after surviving an assassination attempt in 2010. The official news agency Mehr quoted him as saying, "The Fordo site near Qum would soon be opened and become operational." Iranian news papers reported the development on Sunday.

While Iran has often exaggerated its abilities, nuclear experts say that it does not. In December, inspectors for the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that during a visit to the plant they saw the finishing touches put on switchboard centrifuges and said they expected the facility to be operating soon.

Iran says its nuclear program is critical to its national security — not because it is seeking weapons, but because it wants an alternative energy source to oil and is seeking to refuel a reactor that makes medical isotopes.

Five years of sanctions have deeply hurt the Iranian economy, but have not changed its nuclear strategy. But the new U.S. sanctions, along with an ominous Israeli military deployment in Europe, aim to undercut the government by squeezing its most important source of revenue: oil sales.

In response, Iran has closely signaled that the sanctions have only hardened its determination to proceed. On Sunday, for instance, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad began a highly publicized series of visits to South American leaders that have been critical of the United States, starting with President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

Iran threatened early last month to disrupt shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, an action that analysts say could send global oil prices soaring. Iran conducted military exercises in the waterway, and then said it would use forces to bar any country of the United States aircraft carrier, John C. Stennis, and its escort ships.

While US officials and outside experts have dismissed the threat as hyperbole, and say they have many missions of patrolling the area with a carrier, there is broad concern that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has batches of radium passing through the narrow strait or lay mines that could cause significant risks to shipping.

The opening of the plant does not significantly affect estimates of how long it would take Iran to produce a nuclear weapon, if that is its true intention. The new facility has been inspected regularly, and unless the Iranians barred inspectors or managed to disrupt them, any effort to produce uranium at bomb-grade levels would most likely be detected. US officials have estimated that they would have enough warning time to react, if needed, before the enrichment was completed.

But should it come to that, the Fordo plant (its itself would greatly complicate any military action. Satellite photographs show it is surrounded by antiaircraft guns, and the air defense system was designed to make a bombing campaign nearly impossible. Officials said Saturday that the plant would house a new generation of centrifuges — the machines that spin at supersonic speeds to enrich uranium — that are more thought responsive, largely new styles, far less efficient models at the plant.

"We can lose a full course of the Iranian production plan then," said one diplomat who has studied the few details Iran has shared about the plant. "And I think that's the point." — New York Times News Service

PHOTO: President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, center, with the Natanz Uranium Enrichment Facility in photo taken on April 8, 2008.

Giffords leads vigil as US remembers Tucson

TUCSON, Arizona — US lawmaker Gabrielle Giffords led a candlelight vigil in Tuesday, one year after the Tucson shooting that nearly killed her, as President Barack Obama called for recovery in "injured."

Her voice strong and unwavering, the Democratic congresswoman, who was shot in the head at point-blank range in a rampage that left six dead, led the crowd in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Her husband, retired astronaut Mark Kelly stood next to her.

Gabby! Gabby!," shouted thousand of participants to the ceremony as the congresswoman pumped her head into the air to the rhythm of her name after fighting a long recovery process.

The ceremony began with an orchestra playing "A Tragedy in America," a tune composed by student Alex Gaskin in the days after the shooting.

"We the past year, we had some tough times," Kelly said softly, addressing the crowd. "The reality of pain, of letting go, of the past. The reality of life, letting go on dear friends and family members.

"We have all seen that healing is possible," he continued. "We have seen acts of kindness that are credible with today led us in the Pledge of Allegiance."

Giffords was left fighting for her life after a gunman shot her through the front of the head in

PHOTO: Kelly leans on his wife, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, at a vigil for the victims and survivors of the shooting that wounded Giffords, 13 others and killed six one year ago.

an apparent assassination attempt before spraying bullets into her public meeting with constituents outside a Tucson supermarket.

Among the dead in the January 8, 2011 rampage were a federal judge, a nine-year-old girl and a member of the congressional staff.

In March, the alleged shooter, Jared Loughner, who declared himself unable to stand trial. Experts found the 23-year-old to be schizophrenic and unable to help in his own defense or understand court proceedings.

Loughner is in the aftermath of the tragic focused on the toxic political climate in the United States and whether it in some way inspired the mass gunman.

Obama, who gave an emotive and rousing memorial service a year ago, imploring Americans to choose their civilized democracy, called Giffords on Sunday to "follow his support" ahead of the University of Arizona event.

"The President told Rep. Giffords that he said the First Lady keep her, the families of the killed, and the whole Tucson community in their daily thoughts and prayers said, along with the entire nation, continue to root her in recovering them time," the White House said.

The President expressed admiration at the courage and determination Rep. Giffords has shown along her incredible road to recovery, calling her an inspiration to his family and demonstrate across the country," the White House said in a statement.

Giffords, who announced her emotional return to the House of Representatives last August to vote on a controversial debt compromise, drawing a standing ovation from Democratic and Republican lawmakers.

Ahead of Sunday's vigil, several hundred people gathered in Tucson, with the city's children's museum offering free admission and allowing families to sign "kindness postcards" and paint coins for an eventual "kindness mural." — AFP

Israel charges five in clash at Army base

JERUSALEM — Israeli prosecutors on Sunday charged five radical Jewish settlers with trashing troop movements in the West Bank, and organizing a raid on an Israeli army base there last month.

The indictment was the first sign of a promised crackdown on settlers whose increasingly violent attacks on Palestinians have described by some Israeli officials as homegrown terrorism.

In recent years, small groups of radical settlers have pursued tactics known as "price tag," attacking Palestinian civilians and vandalizing property, defacing Israeli security forces and destroying military equipment. The point is to terrify them, or retaliate for any attempt by the Israeli army or the police to dismantle property in illegally built outposts scheduled to be removed by the government.

Israeli leaders have expressed growing alarm at the violence of the settlers, including arson attacks against women's mosques. But the December attack on the army base shocked much of country and drew a strong condemnation from leaders of the settler establishment, not least because the base's main target is responsible for protecting the settlements in the West Bank.

According to the indictment, the settlers were planning to demonstrate an illegal outpost in the northern West Bank called Migron. Without use the night of Dec. 12, that the prosecutors said, that the evacuation was thwarted by the five suspects who organized the raid on the army base, during which dozens of soldiers broke in, evicted, blocked the entrance with trash and furniture, and damaged military vehicles. A deputy brigade commander was injured by being struck on the forehead.

The same night, attackers stopped a car driven by a local Israeli commander and threw a brick at his head. The army had been deployed to dismantle the outpost ended up being diverted to handle the disturbances.

Two eight Jews Israeli forces removed two structures at the outpost. The following morning, a mosque in a village outside the West Bank city of Nablus was set on fire, defaced and set on fire. Hebrew graffiti said "war," "price tag" and "Brigade from Migron Hilltop."

The violence prompted the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to announce new measures to curb the outbreak. He said that the attacks would not be treated the same way suspected Palestinian militants are detained for long periods without charge and tried in military courts. — AFP/NYT

Romney emerges unscathed from debates

CONCORD, New Hampshire — Republican presidential hopefuls poised to blast front-runner Mitt Romney's program but failed to land any telling blows in head-to-head meetings on the home ahead of Tuesday's New Hampshire primary.

Squaring off Sunday in their second televised grilling in just 48 hours, Romney's stoic, seasoned demeanour not be exposed the relatively light hitting they gave him during the evening, relentlessly luring him the favorite.

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich, whose outings have did in the face of attack ads from Romney's campaign team in recent weeks, took the easiest leader to the Republican race would lose against incumbent Democrat Barack Obama and at one point accused him of "phony baloney." Gingrich said the former Massachusetts governor was a "moderate" with "no economic plan to stand it resembles Obama's." "What Republicans have to ask is, who's most likely to the long run to survive against the kind of billion-dollar campaign the Obama team is going to run?" Gingrich asked, urging voters to the bellwether state of New Hampshire against finding that Romney is the most electable candidate.

"I do think the biggest the contrast, the bolder the ideas, the clearer the choice, the fuller it is for that billion-dollar campaign to receive but very hard to to offer," in the November 6 presidential election, said Gingrich.

Romney rebutted the charge that he was not strong enough to beat Obama.

"I'm very proud of the conservative record I have," said Romney, who it seen as the likely nominee if he can make good on a vast lead in opinion polls here and in South Carolina after squeezing out a win in the first caucus-site week.

And in a shot at Gingrich and ex-senator Rick Santorum, a former Christian conservative, Romney said, "someone who isn't a lifelong politician" would have a better shot at beating Obama.

But Santorum thundered back and praised Romney as weak for declining not to run for re-election as a governor in the face of poor poll numbers.

"We want someone who's going to stand up and fight for the conservative principles, not bail out," Santorum said.

Romney, who made millions as a venture capitalist and invested a failed bid for the party's presidential nomination in 2008, yet bolted that politics "is not a career" for him, but the remark drew an angry response.

"Can we drop a bit of this private equity?" Gingrich scoffed. "You were running for president while you were governor... you've been running consistently for years and years and years."

While the attacks announced in a sharp escalation in tone against Romney, his consistent no major errors, making it unlikely that the assault would derail his better-heeled, better-organized campaign. — AFP

ROMNEY as the debates in Manchester, New Hampshire. AP

US, British officials victims of Stratfor website hacking

LONDON — E-mail addresses and passwords belonging to British, US and NATO officials were posted online following the hacking of a US intelligence analysis firm, the Guardian, the Guardian daily reported Monday.

Online "hacktivist" group Anonymous claimed via Twitter on Christmas Day that it had stolen a trove of emails and credit card information from Stratfor's member subscribers.

According to a source carried out for the Guardian by John Bumgarner, an expert in cyber-security at the US Cyber Consequences Unit, a research body in Washington, details of senior British intelligence officials and US defense staff were hacked.

In the US case, details of 177 individuals serving in Afghanistan were published, along with the personal details of former vice-president Dan Quayle and former secretary of state Henry Kissinger.

Some 221 British military officials and 2,62 NATO staff were also victims along with advisers to Britain's Joint Intelligence Organization, a body which reports sensitive information to Prime Minister David Cameron, Bumgarner found.

Around 15,000 email addresses belonging to US military personnel were also leaked.

Stratfor, which is based in Texas, specializes in foreign affairs and security issues.

The hacked spreadsheets contained email addresses and encrypted passwords of around 860,000 individuals who had subscribed to the consultancy's website.

Over 75,000 subscribers also had their credit card numbers and addresses revealed, the Guardian reported.

Experts claim that the encrypted passwords would be cracked quickly using off-the-shelf software.

"We are aware that subscriber details for Stratfor website have been published in the public domain," a British government spokesman said.

"At present, there is no indication of any threat to UK government systems." The hackers said they were able to obtain the information in part because members did not encrypt it, which could pose a major source of embarrassment in the global intelligence firm.

Anonymous has been involved in years of hacking exploits, including the recent disabling of a website of Syrian Ministry of Defense to protest ethnicity crackdown against government protesters. — AFP

China exempts vegetables from VAT

BEIJING — China's fresh vegetable sellers will be exempted from a 13 percent value-added tax from 2012, Chinese Ministry of Finance said on Monday, the latest step by Beijing to relieve cost pressures on consumer items.

Wholesale and retail sellers of dried, frozen, dried and packaged vegetables from potatoes to cabbages are entitled to the tax break, the ministry said on its website. Farmers and growers selling of canned vegetables must pay the tax.

The latest fine-tuning of food policy is unlikely to satisfy independent economists like Andy Xie, who believes tax rounds announced so far are insufficient with fiscal revenue growing faster than gross domestic output and personal income.

Xie wrote in the latest issue of the Century Weekly magazine that China should cut taxes by 1 trillion yuan — or about 18 percent of total annual tax revenue — Beijing wants to deliver a real economic boost.

He advocates a 20 percent across-the-board cut to value-added tax, consumption tax and business tax on top of additional cuts in personal income tax. — Reuters

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Greco

Anwar acquitted, vows to win elections

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim was acquitted on Monday in a stunning climax to a two-year sodomy trial and quickly set his sights on ousting the long-ruling coalition in upcoming polls.

The unexpected decision set off pandemonium at the Kuala Lumpur High Court where the 62-year-former deputy premier who was sacked in 1998 and jailed on earlier sodomy charges—was mobbed by jubilant family and friends.

"Thank God, justice has been served," Anwar told reporters in the courtroom after being cleared of sexual misconduct with a young male aide charges he said were a conspiracy to cripple his insurgent opposition alliance.

He shared Anwar later told AFP in an interview that he was now about to focus on the prize he has sought since his shock ouster from the ruling party in 1998: unseating the governing Barisan Nasional coalition in history.

"Now that I am vindicated and freed, naturally I will work with my friends and... the coalition of opposition parties in order we are now poised of Putrajaya (Malaysia's administrative capital)," he said.

The ruling came as a surprise to many, including Anwar, who had said Prime Minister Najib Razak had fixed the verdict to remove him as a political threat and shore up the coalition's five-decade grip on power.

Information Minister Rais Yatim said the ruling proved the sincerity of recent promises by Najib to do away with his coalition's authoritarian ways.

Najib faces a deadline of early next year to hold new polls in the embattled country, amid an source-rich nation, in which he hopes to reverse unprecedented gains made by the opposition in 2008 elections.

But Anwar is now free to campaign at the helm of his opposition alliance—an unlikely marriage between Malaysia's dominant Malay community, conservative Muslim forces, and the ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities.

The verdict throws the electoral landscape wide open, said analyst Jeffrey Kitingan, head of Malaysia's leading polling firm Merdeka Center.

The outcome "vindicates Anwar and significantly removes doubts about his personal conduct, which has been a concern especially among conservative Muslim voters", Kitingan said.

But he added that Najib can now also plausibly claim that his pledges of reforms to civil liberties—which the opposition has called an empty election ploy—are for real.

Tensions spiked briefly outside the court as three small explosions took place.

Kuala Lumpur police chief Mohamad Salleh told AFP five people sustained "light injuries" and were taken to hospital, but he declined to comment on what caused the blasts.

ANWAR knows other court says he's no sodomite. —

News of the acquittal electrified the crowds outside the courthouse, where hundreds of security personnel guarded the streets.

"All of a sudden he is free. I feel very excited. Finally he got justice," said jubilant hotel worker Shima Sharif, 46.

The charismatic Anwar had been groomed to succeed then premier Mahathir Mohamad until a bitter row between them forced Anwar out in 1998, and he was jailed on sodomy and graft charges widely seen as politically motivated.

He was freed in 2004 after the sodomy charge was overturned and restored the leadership of the opposition, which seized control of the states and a third of parliamentary seats in the 2008 polls.

The new sodomy charges emerged shortly after, sparking accusations they were concocted by the government to stall the opposition revival.

Sodomy is illegal in Muslim-majority Malaysia and punishable by up to 20 years in jail. AFP

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WILDCAT STRIKE
A wild bid grows respect snaps the head of a man as it sits in after wandering into a residential neighborhood in Gauhati, in the northern state of Assam, India in photos taken on Jan. 7. Later the leopard was tranquilized by wildlife officials and taken to the state zoological park. —

Arab League appeals again to Syria

CAIRO—The Arab League called again on Sunday for Syrian security forces and armed groups to immediately halt the violence in the country, and urged the Syrian government to comply with the terms of a peace deal to end months of bloodshed.

The call came on a day when activists said that at least 21 people were killed, despite the presence of Arab League monitors in the country.

An offshoot of the league met in Cairo to discuss "heavy fighting erupted in southern Syria following the defection of dozens of soldiers from the army, activists and Syrian human rights groups said. The defections reportedly killed at least 11 soldiers in the town of Busr al-Harir in the southern province of Deraa. Those reports could not be independently confirmed, because Syria rarely allows reporters for foreign news outlets to work in the country.

The league's ministerial committee called on "the Syrian government and various armed groups to immediately halt all forms of violence and to return to pursuing peacefully to date the Arab League-observers' mission in Syria uncensored."

Foreign ministers from five of the league's 22 members were meeting following the publication of the first report by the Arab League observers, who arrived in Syria on Dec. 26 to assess whether the government of President Bashar Assad was complying with the terms of an agreement brokered by the league.

That agreement calls for Syria to withdraw all troops and military vehicles from the streets, to release all political prisoners and to allow the presence of ministers and foreign journalists. Syria accepted the agreement on Dec. 19.

The observers' report seemed unlikely to please either side. It stopped well short of adopting the government's narrative that it is battling armed terrorist groups. But neither did it fully endorse the opposition's reports of widespread military deployments and shelling of cities. New York Times News Service

MORALCO ENHANCES CONVERGYS OPERATIONS

Convergys Philippines, one of the leading business process outsourcing (BPO) companies and among the largest employers in the country, signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Manila Electric Company (Meralco) which entails two of their accounts to the Meralco Customer Choice Program (CCP). Through the CCP, Convergys will benefit from lower power rates during off-peak hours, enabling it to be more cost-efficient and flexible in expanding its contact centers located in Meralco's franchise area. Shaping the MOA are Meralco Senior Vice President and Customer Retail Services and Corporate Communications head Ed Peña (3rd from left) and Convergys Customer Management Business in Asia Pacific (APAC) and Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region Managing Director Mark Zamora (4th from left). Also in photo are (from left) Meralco Assistant Vice President and Private Sector Relationship Management head Ma. Cecilia M. Domingo, Meralco Vice President and Corporate Business Group head Victor S. Corrales, Convergys Philippines Services Corp. Facilities Director Jose Lloser, Jr. and Convergys Philippines Services Corp. Facilities Manager Donet Kaufman.

Look out, civet coffee: World's most 'most expensive' tea grown in panda poo

CHENGDU, China—Chinese entrepreneur Wenhui is convinced he has found the key ingredient to produce the world's most expensive tea—panda poo.

The former calligraphy teacher has purchased 11 tons of excrement from a panda breeding center to fertilize a tea crop in the mountains of Sichuan province in southwestern China, home to the black and white bears.

He says he will harvest the first batch of tea leaves in spring and it will be the "world's most expensive tea" at almost 220,000 yuan ($35,000) for 500 grams.

Chinese tea drinkers regard the first batch of tea to be harvested in the early spring as the best and successive batches, regarded as inferior, will sell for around 20,000 yuan.

The 41-year-old, who is so passionate about his tea project, has been ridiculed by some in China for his extravagant claims of the potential health benefits of the tea.

But he insists he is deadly serious, saying he quit his job at Sichuan University to throw himself "heart and soul" into his company Heshi Tea, whose logo features a smiling panda sweating a bow tie and holding a steaming glass of green tea.

While An hopes to make money from the tea, which he has planted on just over a hectare of land, his main mission is to convince the world to protect the environment and replace chemical fertilizers with animal feces—believe it or not.

"Panda dung is rich in nutrients... and should be much better than chemical fertilizers," An said. "People should make a harmonious relationship with heaven, earth and the environment."

"Everybody has an obligation to protect the environment," he added.

The tea aficionado got the idea to use panda feces as fertilizer after attending a seminar last year where he discovered that the bears absorbed less than 30 percent of the bamboo they consumed, excreting the remaining 70 percent.

An showed AFP a glass jar of fresh-looking panda feces, which he uses to fertilize two tea plants in his office, noting the "quality" and "green" colors of the dung.

He is so convinced by the results "he will be a bit dear he has patented the idea in case a competitor stealing it.

His claim that the green tea will help people lose weight and protect them from radiation has been ridiculed by some Chinese web users, who have expressed doubts about the purported health benefits of the tea and the high asking price for the first harvest.

"If it is such a good fertilizer for tea plants, I want to ask this teacher: why don't you just eat panda dung? Then you can get the rest of the 70 percent nutrition," a web user called Rudeandu said. AFP

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BUSINESS

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Share prices edge up close to record high

INDICATORS
PESO-DOLLAR RATE
44.110

Corporate earnings seen to post double-digit rise due to strong liquidity

By Doris C. Dumlao

SHARE prices yesterday rallied, lifting the main index back to 4,500, as investors loaded up on blue chips given market prospects for 2012.

The main share Philippine Stock Exchange index gained 58.24 points, or around 1.3 percent, to finish at 4,543.60.

Tracking the trend seen in other markets across the region, the local stock index is now approaching the record close of 4,566, which was hit on Aug. 1, 2011.

"The beauty of the Philippines is shining through," said Manny Lefreniz, deputy chief of PNB Securities. "The market's strong performance is the evidence of growing optimism in Philippine fundamentals, as well as that for emerging markets in general."

Corporate earnings in the country are widely expected to rise by a double-digit level this year, buoyed by strong liquidity as well as the fiscal and monetary stimulus.

The green spurt is widely expected to boost spending this year, while the

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Yields on short-term treasury bills decline

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE YIELDS on the three- and six-month treasury bills fell during the first auction for short-term government securities this year, as the highly liquid banks scrambled for the virtually risk-free debt instruments.

However, the interest rate on the one-year bill rose as demand subsided in anticipation of cuts in the key policy rates of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

"They (banks) are anticipating a policy action from the BSP or the rate for the 364-day bills increased and the yields were lower than rediscounted," National Treasurer Roberto Tan said in a briefing after the auction held at the Bureau of the Treasury in Manila.

The rate for the 91-day treasury bill settled at 1.428 percent, declining by 12.8 basis points from the 1.5356 percent registered in the last auction for the securities held in December.

Bankers for the three-month government securities amounted to P6.66 billion, higher than the debt offering of P2.5 billion.

The auction committee accepted only P2.5 billion worth of bids despite the over-subscription, as the government need not to over-borrow.

Demand for one-year security low

The rate for the 182-day bills fell 1.824 percent, down by 0.6 basis points from 1.90 percent in the previous auction.

Bids for the six-month debt instruments reached P6.35 billion, or more than the debt offering of only P2 billion.

Similar to the three-month T-bills, accepted bids for the six-month securities were just the same as the debt offering. The auction committee believed that there was no need for higher share programmed borrowing.

The yield on the one-year T-bills rose by 99.0 basis points to 2.097 percent, from the previously recorded rate of 1.079 percent.

Tan said demand for the one-year bills was dampened by prospects of a policy rate cut by the BSP.

Earlier, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. hinted that the central bank might cut its key policy rates within the first quarter of this year to help cushion the economy from the ill-effects of unfavorable developments offshore.

These unfavorable developments include the lingering debt crisis in the Euro zone, which is feared to suffer from a mild recession this year, and the resulting cut in the country's export earnings.

With lower BSP policy rates, banks will affect commercial interest rates, demand for bank loans is expected to accelerate. Consequently, consumption and investments are expected to be boosted as well.

But with lower policy rates, banks will earn less from their deposits under BSP facilities, analysts said, banks want higher yields on their investments in long-term government securities. This brought about the rise in the one-year T-bill rate.

Funds raised from the sale of government securities this year would be used to help plug a programmed budget deficit of P300 billion.

The P300-billion deficit ceiling of the government for this year is lower than the P300-billion ceiling set for 2011.

The government is trying to gradually reduce the deficit as it aims for higher credit ratings for the country.

Early market forecast

MARKET RIDER

Dave Sarmiento

SHARE prices performed strongly last week to what could be interpreted as an early sign of the market's general trend and the investors' expectation for the year.

Value turnover reached P22.71 billion, involving about 17.59 billion shares.

The volume and value of transactions propelled stock prices upwards in the first four trading days.

This sent the benchmark index just about 44.74 points away from the all-time high of 4,563.65, which was established in August last year.

On lower value turnover, however, the market fell lower on Friday, 6.6 points or 0.14 percent, to close at 4,482.38 at the close of trading last week.

The drop in the market index on Friday was blamed largely on profit taking. Investors apparently decided to pocket their gains and play it safe for the weekend as uncertainties continued to cloke the state of the global market.

Additional observations

The theory of investing on the basis of technical analysis, as especially practiced in swing trading and trading in turn on liquid stocks, also came into play as profit taking need not be triggered by external or fundamental factors, such as the one cited above, but dictated by internal aspects, such as the price movements of stocks at play.

Accordingly, if the price of a stock is moving up too fast in a short period of time, as what happened last week, it is likely that the week will be subject to a sell-off because investors will be tempted to "capture or actualize" the perceived gains in the stock ensured by the momentary movement of its price.

On Monday, the market was up 25.12 points, or by 0.57 percent, at 4,397.03 on a total value turnover of about P1.76 billion and total volume of 0.481 billion shares.

The following day, Tuesday, the market continued to rise to 4,411.22, again, it was up by another 25.14 points, or 0.24 percent, with value turnover at P1.78 billion for a total volume of 3.83 billion shares.

The Wednesday stock prices witnessed their climb. At the close of trading for the day, the market was up 65.55 points, or 1.48 percent, with value turnover at P5.43 billion for total volume of 3.21 billion shares.

Although the market continued its climb on Thursday it failed to maintain its previous rate of increase.

The market experienced some price drop that the overall rise of the index was limited to only 31.39 points, or 0.69 percent.

The value turnover was bigger than the average value turnover in the previous three trading days at P6.23 billion. Also, the volume of transaction grew with 8.70 billion shares.

As a result, this reduced the average price of stocks to only P0.93 per share as compared to the first three-day average of P1.24 per share...a sign that the price dynamics at play have changed.

An additional sign that may confirm this further is that, although the market was only about 44.74 points away from the market's all-time high of 4,563.65 on Thursday, it did not close at its session high of 4,525.21 but lower at 4,518.91.

These little changes in the price dynamics of stocks at play contributed to the market's reversal fall on Friday, when it closed lower at 4,482.38, some 35.53 points or 0.79 percent down.

More observations

The observed change in the behavior of these factors may not necessarily lead to an automatic and predictable change in the trend and nature of stock prices as seemingly implied in the foregoing observations. All this thing to says, these factors are always part of the dynamics of a stock play.

Thus, if we are to use the trending up behavior of the market last week as a basis, our market will certainly produce better finished post.

Withstanding the uncertain outlook of the world market, this may just happen as early reports point to a better than expected potential results from a majority of the first 10000 corporations of the country.

Their earnings forecasts for the short and long-term are said to be reflective of the prospective outlook on the local market's potential this year and beyond.

Also, the market's new trading hours may help grow handiest and bolster market performance. The bourse has started to implement its new trading hours last week to open at 9:30 a.m., break for lunch at noon, resume trading at 1:30 p.m., and close for the day at 3:30 p.m.

The new schedule provides for a total of five hours of trading time. It is one and one half hours more than the trading period when the bourse closed at 1 p.m.

This extended trading hour may lead to more business. It may also improve overall market price performance. The only question is how cost effective it is when compared to alternative trading hour regimens. For instance, the bourse will do away with the lunch break in exchange for opening later in the morning and still operate for five hours and 5:30 p.m.

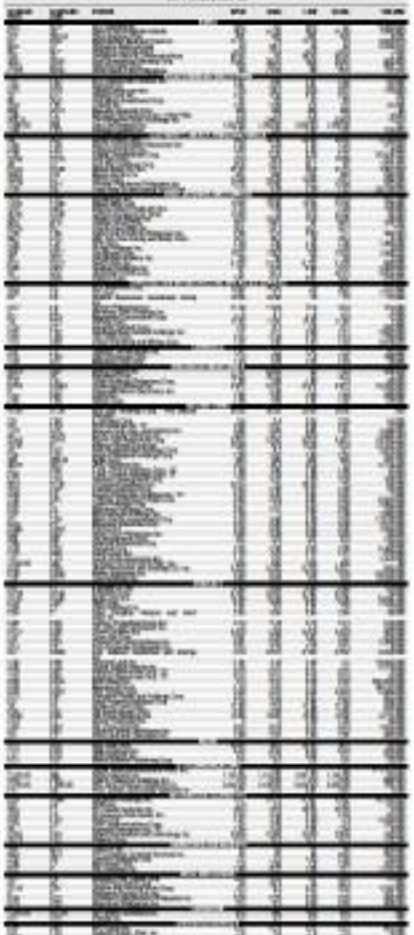
This change will not alter the market's closing time of 3:30 p.m., which is the time when the day-offset or the same time or even 30 minutes later than some of the stock exchanges that somehow influence the overall trend and nature of price performances in the region.

Bottom line spin

Based on these observations, the market may hit 5,000 of the benchmark index by the end of the year. This will be about 2000 points higher than last year's performance.

Come to think about it, this could be a year the market surges overdoing the various fundamental developments that are expected to unfold in the gaming, property, mining and oil sectors within the year.

(The writer is a licensed stockbroker of Regis Equities, Inc. You may e-mail the Market Rider at tan.he.sa@regisequities.com.ph or directly at www.dailystar.ph.com.)



PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

CURRENCIES

PSBank to offer ₱3B in debt notes

PHILIPPINE Savings Bank, the thrift bank arm of the Mercantile group, is set to launch a ₱3 billion offering of debt notes qualifying as tier 2 (or supplementary) capital in February to boost funds for expansion.

PSBank president Herman Garcia III said yesterday that the issuance, which would be arranged by ING Bank, was tentatively scheduled for launching on Feb. 2.

Petronio Barzaga Jr. Dimagiba Jr., chief finance officer of PSBank, said the thrift bank had received written notice of approval from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas on Jan. 4 and was now completing the remaining documentary requirements for the offering of ₱3-year tier 2 notes.

"We want to submit all documents by Wednesday," he said in an interview.

Taking advantage of ample liquidity in the financial system, PSBank is boosting its cash board for expansion, including prospective acquisitions.

PSBank has obtained a triple-A credit rating from local credit watcher Philippine Rating Services Corp. for its tier 2 offering. Obligations rated by "PRS Aaa," the highest rating in Philrating's scale, are deemed of highest quality with minimal credit risk. The obligor's capacity to meet its financial commitments on the obligation is extremely strong."

In a recent statement, Philrating said the rating reflected PSBank's strong management team and deposit generation ability, as well as its sound asset quality. The rating agency said it also considered the "still favorable, albeit moderated outlook for domestic consumer credit, where PSBank has a solid market franchise."

It was noted that PSBank had been pursuing a strong growth strategy in recent years, while maintaining its focus on the consumer retail markets. As of mid-2011, about 41 percent and 33 percent of PSBank's loans were for auto and housing, respectively. (Sarmiento, C. Ramirez)

Vehicle sales fell by 4% in '11

Japan situation, flooding in Thailand drastically cut supply

By Amy R. Borja

VEHICLE sales last year fell by 4 percent to 1,013,836 units from 147,600 units in 2010, due largely due to disruptions in the supply of vehicle units and automotive parts.

A joint report of the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi) and Truck Manufacturers Association (TMA) showed that sales of all types of vehicles posted declines by the end of 2011.

For December 2011 alone, industry sales registered a 14.2 percent drop to 70,374 units, from 12,000 units in the same month in 2010.

According to Campi, sales of passenger cars for 2011 registered an 8 percent decline to 44,382 units from the 48,739 units in the previous year.

On a month-on-month basis, however, the local automotive industry posted a 22.7 percent sales increase to 5,073 units in December from 2,010 units in November 2011, due mainly to aggressive sales promotion activities of vehicle companies.

Sales of commercial vehicles (CV) fell by 2.82 percent in 2011 from year ago level. CV sales in December, alone, also fell by 23.61 percent to 7,301 units from 9,556 units in the previous month due to supply limitations.

Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. maintained its top spot in the market, with its sales as of end-December reaching 54,919 units. This is equivalent to a market share of 38.53 percent.

Compared to 2010 levels, however, sales of Toyota vehicles registered a 4-percent decline.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. came second, with sales reaching 32,633 units during the same period, granting a 23.62 percent market share.

On the third, fourth and fifth spots were Isuzu Co. Phils. Inc., Honda Cars Philippines Inc. and Ford Philippines Corp.

The local automotive industry has been adversely affected by the crisis in Japan and the flooding in Thailand, as both countries are major sources of vehicle units and automotive parts.

The earthquake and tsunami that struck certain parts of Japan in March last year resulted in the shutdown of vehicle assembly plants and auto parts factories.

But as the Japan situation started to ease in the second half of the year, Thailand was hit by the worst flood experienced by the country in at least 50 years. The flooding in Thailand further cut the supply of vehicles and auto parts to the Philippines.

"Floods have interfered several vehicle and parts manufacturing plants in Thailand, resulting to the shutdown of their operations," Campi earlier said.

Mining industry in for reforms this year

By Rico T. Delmendez

THE LOOK government units' open pit mining ban notwithstanding, other issues plaguing the industry will be addressed this year, officials said. The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CMP) said it was optimistic that the so-called minerals policy group drafting the country's mining policy would recommend the continued promotion of "responsible" mining as allowed under the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

"We are hopeful that the government will consider our recommendations aimed at restoring the stability of the business environment to enable the industry to further assist in the President's program aimed at attracting investments that will generate direct and indirect employment and thereby reduce poverty particularly in the countryside where most of our poor constituents live," CMP spokesperson Rudy Intengan-Intapti said.

CMP's recommendations include: Dropping the tax breakages in the mining industry; allowing the industry to pay directly to the LGUs their shares in mining taxes; deferring action on ordinances banning open pit mining, amending R.A. 7076 to supersede/repeal P.D. 1899 (which vests governors or small-scale mining); dropping of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles and Certificate of Ancestral Land Titles; setting a deadline for delineation of ancestral domains/lands and recognition of indigenous peoples; and adopting the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

Mines and Geosciences Bureau Director Leo L. Jasareno said in a separate e-mail that solution would be based on recommendations of the group created to study the tagging issues in the mining industry.

The members of the group will formulate the mining industry policy of the administration "before the end of the year," Jasareno said.

Specifically, the group is tasked to address issues such as lack of baseline exploration data, policy inconsistencies between national and local laws, governance and law enforcement, lack of local economic valuation for the mining industry, narrowing government share in mining revenues, and the adverse effects of environmental degradation and climate change.

The group will also provide "a clear and detailed assessment" of the state of the mining industry, its impacts, effects and potential for the future, and consult with concerned stakeholders such as the mining industry, non-government and civil society organizations, and environmental groups, among others.

The study group is composed of Environment Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje, Presidential Adviser on Environmental Protection Teresita Sy-Coson, Presidential Assistant on Climate Change Heherson Alvarez, and Climate Change Commissioner Vice-chair Lucille Sering.

Zest Air improves cargo system

ZEST Air has reported a big improvement in the efficiency of its cargo operation due largely to the automation of its system.

Automation enabled the company to offer better and faster cargo services, airline president and CEO Alfredo M. Yao said in a statement.

The said Zest Air was able to ship about 15.2 million kilograms of cargo last year because of its more efficient cargo operations.

"Processing of airway bills is now faster and transaction time has been greatly reduced since we automated our cargo system," said Yao.

He said cargo was shipped out on a first come first serve basis. No additional premium is levied on cargo that is shifted on the first flight, unlike in other carriers that charge higher for their earliest flights.

Rudy Ramirez, senior vice president for cargo and logistics, said it was more economical for customers to monitor their shipments because they could easily check their status and subsequently collect. "Zest Air is the only domestic carrier that offers this convenience at the moment. With others, you have to go through a forwarder to check on your cargo."

"Most of our regular shippers used other carriers before and they shifted to us when they found our rates more competitive and our services more attuned to their needs."

Zest Air has a current fleet of eight Airbus A320 aircraft, 3 A319s and 5 Mitsubishi/Airbus cargo space of 27.4 cu. meters for both A320 and A319; and 9.5 cu. meters for the MA60.

Share prices up

Previous Pg

several bank is expected to see interest rates given a benign inflation environment.

All consumer managed to edge higher, but the day's top gainer was the financial sector, up by 2.16 percent.

Value turnover amounted to P5.16 billion. There were 104 advancers against 83 decliners, while 42 stocks were unchanged.

Investors loaded up on a mix of blue chips, second-liners and third-liner stocks.

The stocks that rose on heavy volume were PSPT, Logenix A (the local investment and Logenix B issues as all), Mentelcash, BDO, SMC, PNoot, Ayal, SMC, PNB, ALI, Nickel, Security Bank, BPI and AEV.

On the other hand, there were profit-taking on DMCI, Digitel, AC, EDC and Globe Telecom.

Traders said the local market would maintain a rising momentum despite rising risk aversion abroad.

With prospects of local investor rotation during this year, cash-rich investors may knock on the local bourse, looking for better yields.

Across the globe, however, sentiment turned cautious as the European Union's debt woes intensified investors' worries.

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"Nading"

Former Congressman, 3rd District of Manila
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January 25, 1922 - January 8, 2012

His memory will always be remembered by his wife Rosalinda Garcia-Fugoso; children Dr. Leonardo Jr. "Do" and Anita, Councilor Ma. Asuncion "Re", Dr. Anthony "Mi", Pamela "Fa" and Homobono Pascual; grandchildren Ida, Bettina and Brian; sisters Adelia and Josefina Fugoso-Guillaran; brothers † Dr. Valeriano, † Mauricio, † Rodolfo and † Virgilio.

His remains lie in state at the Hearts of Jesus and Mary Parish, Daly Mirror St., West Triangle, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 14, 2012 at Manila North Cemetery after the 8:00 a.m. mass.

Please omit flowers.

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S&P sets PH GDP growth target for '12 at 4-4.5%

By Michelle V. Ramos

Pace seen as decent given economic turmoil in US, Europe

STANDARD & Poor's (S&P) expects the Philippines to post a respectable—not lower-than-desired—economic growth of 4 to 4.5 percent this year, saying domestic consumption may still be the key driver as export momentum will likely remain uncertain given the economic woes in export markets in the West.

Government economic officials said an ideal growth rate for the Philippines is at least 7 percent for sustained expansion to reduce poverty.

Nonetheless, S&P said the projected growth rate for the Philippines, as well as other Asia-Pacific countries, is decent given that advanced economies, led by those in the euro zone, are seen to grow by less than one percent, if not register a contraction.

The credit rating agency also said the likely deceleration of China in 2012 will further dampen export earnings, and thus overall growth, of other Asia-Pacific economies.

"A delay external environment along with a policy-induced slowdown in China would impede growth rates across the region in 2012," S&P said in a report in its 2012 outlook for Asia-Pacific.

"Nevertheless, family domestic demand will enable countries to post respectable—albeit lower—growth rates this year," the credit ratings firm added.

For 2011, S&P expects the Philippines to have posted a growth of 4.1 to 4.6 percent.

The projections for 2011 and 2012 are much slower than the actual growth of 7.6 percent in 2010, when the country expanded by 7.6 percent, the fastest pace in three decades.

The anticipated slowdown next year and this year is due to the prolonged crisis in the euro zone as well as the slow recovery of the United States from the 2008 recession.

The euro zone and the US are two of the biggest export markets for goods produced by the Philippines and other emerging Asian economies.

S&P said domestic demand in the Philippines and its neighbors is seen to remain robust this year as their growing consumer spending aspirations and investors expand more. Domestic demand in this term to counteract the ill effects of an export-earnings decline.

The credit rating firm also said the recession in consumer prices resulting from higher domestic demand will likely be within manageable ranges.

It expects inflation in the Philippines to average between 4.2 and 4.7 percent this year, within the government's target of between 3 and 5 percent.

S&P said the growth of countries in Asia-Pacific will partly depend on their reliance on exports to the Western economies.

"While all countries in Asia-Pacific will feel the heat of a sharp slowdown or a recession in Europe and the US, those with greater reliance on exports and with strong trade linkages are most vulnerable," S&P said.

The growth rate projection for the Philippines for 2012 is better than that for Hong Kong (1.0 to 3.5 percent), South Korea (2.8 to 3.3 percent), Singapore (2.0 to 3.5 percent), Taiwan (2.2 to 2.8 percent), and Thailand (3.5 to 4 percent).

These countries only store heavily on exports to the West, compared to the Philippines.

On the other hand, the growth rate projections are better for Indonesia (6 to 6.5 percent), Malaysia (4.4 to 4.9 percent), and Vietnam (5 to 5.5 percent) compared to the Philippines.

US 'insourcing' trend a cause for PH concern

By Ross T. Chiu Jr.

ECONOMISTS warned on Monday that the Philippines' outsourcing sector should develop and market higher-value services in hope with United States moves to "insource" more jobs, which could signal a long-term curb in demand for outsourcing services.

That is, unless Manila-based companies differentiate their services from those that can be obtained in the US and from other outsourcing destinations such as India.

Almost 70 percent of business process outsourcing (BPO) firms in the Philippines rely heavily on US clients, underscoring demand for outsourcing executives is growing in Europe and Australia.

Since BPO firms, knowledge process outsourcing companies, and similar entities contribute greatly to employment and foreign exchange earnings, US insourcing "could lead to a decline in both jobs and dollar revenues," Dr. Gil L. Tesoro of the University of Asia and the Pacific said via text message.

In scope, the Philippines can entrain into higher-value added outsourcing activities. "Cost competitiveness and higher efficiency will be key to maintaining current business," Tesoro said.

"There is no immediate threat in the short run in fact such inward-looking measures may affect the growth of BPOs in the future," Fr. Benjamin E. Diokno of the UP School of Economics said via text message.

Diokno said that it is not clear whether the proposals in the US Congress are connected to incentives to outsourcing companies apply to all or only to new BPO investments.

"In any event, US firms have to figure out whether it is still worthwhile to outsource abroad should the tax incentives be withdrawn," Diokno said.

The National Economic and Development Authority has not issued a preliminary impact assessment as it continues to monitor developments on the proposed "insourcing" in the US.

Industry group Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPAP) also said it was "vigilantly monitoring" developments on proposed US measures.

BPAP executive director Mario Cisneros said in a phone interview that the group's member-companies hope to continue to gain US clients' cost competitiveness as they can grow and create more jobs at home.

"In a free and mature global market we believe that, as private enterprises assess best economic solutions to drive company, revenue and consumer value, global market forces will prevail," Cisneros added in an email. "We just hope that BPO companies that have benefited from US BPO services can relay to the policy makers in the US that outsourcing will be more helpful to the economy."

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics said in a report posted on its website that non-farm payroll employment rose by 200,000 in December, and the unemployment rate, at 8.5 percent, continued to trend down.

Job gains occurred in transportation and warehousing, retail trade, manufacturing, health care, and mining, over the 12 months of 2011, the bureau said, numbers pegged at employment rates by U.S. companies.

Industry estimates that global demand for outsourcing services would triple to a range of about $250 billion to $260 billion by 2020 from the $100-billion-to-$130-billion market in 2008.

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CEDC, Bobeco I deal OK'd

CEBU ENERGY Development Corp., a unit of the Hinrichsen Group, has received regulatory approval for its power supply agreement with Bohol I Electric Cooperative Inc. (Bobeco I).

In a decision, the Energy Regulatory Commission said that the approved and implementation of the electric power purchase agreement (EPPA) would be "beneficial to the member-consumers of Bobeco I by way of reliable, uninterrupted and sufficient supply of power within its franchise area."

Under the electric power purchase agreement, CEDC agrees to supply and deliver 14 megawatts to Bobeco I over the next 15 years.

The ERC approved a rate of P5.2644 per kilowatt-hour.

CEDC will source the power it will provide to the electric cooperative from its 245-MW coal-fired power plant in Toledo City. Cebu. *Amy R. Remo*

Address high power rates, PH urged

By Amy R. Remo

THE PHILIPPINE government must address its steep electricity rates and come up with measures to improve its competitiveness to set up manufacturing hubs, if it wants to step up as the next favored destination in the Asian region.

Arsenal Homer Symcuanco, business consulting head for the Philippines, said there must still allow the country to immediately seize upcoming business opportunities, particularly the full advantages that are expected to come with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-free Trade Area (AFTA) agreement.

In a paper entitled "Developments in major markets—Assessing the risks and Opportunities," Arsenal identified the Philippines as one of the most promising emerging growth countries next to the giants of India and China.

"The opportunity... may not be available in three to five years as it needs to be seized now," he added.

Explaining the trend, Arsenal said that for the past 20 years, export powerhouses Japan and Korea have remained stagnant. The once leading the growth in this side of the world are the other countries in the region, including member-nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"This is due to the outmoded exports of China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Australia, the Philippines, Philippines, and Thailand that have moved the exports of Japan and Korea. China and India have the largest GDP in Asia while Indonesia ranks first among Asian countries," Arsenal explained.

He added that with China nearing to be attractive as a low-cost manufacturing hub for new foreign direct investments, other countries can rise for the poor served by the "Beijing-based Dragon."

Malaysia and Indonesia's double digit median household income growth eliminate them from the list of alternate low-cost countries. Vietnam, meanwhile, is plagued with double-digit high inflation coupled with significant currency devaluation," he said.

"The means other Asian countries, including the Philippines, can take advantage of this niche. But potential investors must be wary of negative factors such as poorly executed governance and contracts as well as simply pursuing an ineffective stimulus of growth and employment," Arsenal added.

Having emerged as a low-cost country in terms of wages, plus its proximity to the demand centers in Asia (China, India and Indonesia), Arsenal believed that the Philippines can be the next investment hub. "Usually, the cost of labor in the Philippines, people think it's relatively expensive but that's not the case," he said.

"If we were to do the differential exposure by 2015, Philippines will be worse than those is a significant variance between developed economies over age hourly wages against the Philippines' wages," Arsenal added.

Apart from wages, the Philippines also has an inherent advantage in cultural factor—the accent and general amicability of the locals are certainly attracting many investors to the country's call-up a tool celebrated in the establishment of many BPOs in the country.

Travel industry group calls for more infra development

By Paolo G. Montecillo

Shattering how much more "fun" it can be in the Philippines will not be enough for government to meet its tourism industry targets before the end of the Aquino administration, the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA) said.

While it supports the Department of Tourism's (DOT) new slogan, the travel industry group said developing the attractive raw into popular destinations would be more effective in attracting more visitors from abroad.

"The PTAA, as a leading partner of the government, will remain steadfast in its role to promote and assist in the development of Philippine tourism," the group's president Alfredo Pascual said in a statement.

He said that, along with the new DOT campaign, it is also important to improve the country's airports and other tourist-related services.

"Hopefully this can be tied together with other initiatives that are being undertaken by the government to further improve the Philippine tourism industry," Clemente said.

He called on the government to implement the recommendations made in the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) drafted last year that called for the redevelopment of major airports, including the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Also listed as priority projects under the development plan were airports in Cebu, Clark, Davao, Puerto Princesa, Iloilo, Laoag and Zamboanga.

Under the NTDP, an improved aviation landscape would result in more flight frequencies and an expansion of tourist destinations being offered by airlines.

The DOT will introduce the new "It's more fun in the Philippines" campaign internationally over the next four months and expects to host 4.2 million tourist arrivals this year.

Of the first 10 months of 2011, tourist arrivals rose up 11.96 percent to 3.38 million as compared to the same period in 2010.

The bulk of the tourists came from Korea, Taiwan, and China along with emerging markets India, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

For 2011, the government is targeting as many as 4 million foreigners to visit the Philippines to bring in much-needed tourist dollars. This target is more than three times the number of tourists that visited the Philippines in 2010, the year President Aquino assumed office.

The DTAA has more than 500 travel and tourism members companies that have operations in key cities in the country.

BUSINESS

Asian markets mostly down on euro zone fears

Pessimism seen to be a 'recurring theme' in 2012

HONG KONG—Asian markets mostly fell on Monday as worries over the euro zone debt crisis eclipsed better-than-expected US economic data, with the euro reaching fresh lows.

South Korea's benchmark Kospi index closed 0.99 percent, or 16.65 points, down at 1,650.49, while Sydney edged down 3.1 points to 4,185.4. Hong Kong fell 0.66 percent in afternoon trade.

Also, Taipei ended 0.39 percent lower, giving up 27.47 points, to 7,095.84.

However, Shanghai ended 1.40 percent higher after Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said Saturday that the government would boost confidence in the stock market but gave no details.

Financial markets in Japan were closed on Monday for a public holiday.

"As expected, the black clouds from Europe stopped any US stateliner boasting through," Australia Harper of IG Markets said in a note. "This pessimism is being played out across equity and currency markets and is likely to be 2012's recurrent theme."

IHS chief Christine Lagarde said her organization may cut its 2012 global growth forecasts, while her economists that the euro was unlikely to "vanish" this year only stoked concerns about the currency.

The gloomy view comes against a backdrop of unilaterally bad euro zone data—unemployment stuck at record high, retail sales down, and consumer and business confidence sinking.

Analysts said the figures showed that the euro zone economy contracted in the last quarter of 2011 and will likely shrink again in the first quarter of this year to be officially in recession.

There are also worries that another round of meetings among European leaders this week may produce few concrete debt-busting measures.

After a brief respite from bad headlines over the New Year holiday period, the euro zone debt crisis has resurfaced with a vengeance, driving down the single currency and threatening Italy and Spain.

The euro fell to a near 16-month low of $1.2665 in early trade Monday before recovering slightly to $1.2790 but still well off Friday's rate of $1.2950 in New York.

Concerns about Spain and Italy's driving fears they could be next to need bailouts from the European Union and International Monetary Fund, after Greece, Ireland and Portugal.

Wall Street was mixed on Friday with the Dow Jones Industrial Average losing 0.43 percent, the broad-based S&P 500 slipping 0.23 percent, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq finished up 0.36 percent. AFP

CURRENCY traders watch their monitors at the foreign exchange dealing room of the Korea Exchange Bank headquarters in Seoul, South Korea. South Korea's Kospi fell 1.1 percent to 1,822.42 as traders continued to fret about Europe's unfolding sovereign debt drama. /rr

Europe may avoid recession in '12, says IMF

JOHANNESBURG—Europe as a whole may avoid a recession this year, and there are reasons to be more upbeat about prospects for the region, South Africa's Business Day newspaper quoted International Monetary Fund head Christine Lagarde as saying.

LAGARDE

"The euro zone seems has changed massively over the last 18 months or so ... there are reasons to be a little bit more upbeat about the prospects," Lagarde told the daily in an interview published on Monday after a visit to South Africa last week.

Some analysts believe a recession is inevitable in the euro zone, where several member states have grappled with sovereign debt problems for months, triggering global risk aversion which has hit emerging markets, such as South Africa, the hardest.

"Our assessment is that even if some of the euro zone countries are in a recession technically for some or all of 2012, the whole of the zone might not technically be in a recession," Lagarde said.

"We've got very different economies creating as different growth rates. That is going to have an impact on the entire euro zone and might avoid recession for the euro zone at large."

However, the euro zone crisis could hurt South Africa's economy, Lagarde said on Saturday.

She urged Africa's economic powerhouse to maintain supportive monetary policy to sustain growth in the medium term.

The central bank in Pretoria kept interest rates at historical lows last year after slashing them by 650 basis points in the two years to mid-2010.

Analysts expect rates to stay on hold for much of this year, despite rising inflation, to give the struggling economy some breathing space. Reuters

LIFESTYLE Wellness

How Bettina Osmeña healed her hyperacidity

BETTINA Osmeña and Bingbing Quiroz

By Margo C. Enriquez
Core Buzz

WITHOUT HER coffee in the morning, culinary artist Via Lim-Castillo would get a headache. However, it came to a point that coffee was making her digestive system very acidic. She could only swallow a piece of toast.

One day, former classmate Isabel Gonzales Quiroz, a distributor of AloeCure, a line of quality health supplements and skincare products made from aloe vera, suggested an idea for hyperacidity. Castillo immediately felt the benefits.

"It has calmed down my digestive system. I can finally get an upset stomach. I take AloeCure to prepare my stomach for the day," says Castillo.

Now she can enjoy her Pinoy breakfast of fried rice, *longsi* and coffee, and has more energy to conduct her cooking classes. She adds that friends afflicted with hyperacidity as well as those who have been drinking coffee again after taking AloeCure.

Castillo also takes AloeCure's chlorella, which she says are more palatable than another brand offered in health food stores. "I

With friend Isabel Gonzales Quiroz, she decided to bring in aloe vera, the new cure-all for digestive problems. It even improved her complexion

MORE ON P.C3

Take charge of your own happiness in 2012

By Liz S. Bersamin
Contributor

THIS WAS an e-mail sent to me without credit to the author. I do believe, however, its original intention was to be shared and I do hope it will help you take full responsibility for your own happiness.

I'd like to emphasize that it is only you who can make yourself happier—it's simple like *pasan*, but is very difficult to follow and see through, which is why I chose to share this.

For 2012, take charge of your own happiness. As Maria Robinson said, "Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending."

But before you can begin the process of transformation, you must stop doing the things that have been holding you back.

Worry will not strip tomorrow of its burdens, it will strip today of its joy

Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. **Stop spending time with the wrong people.** Life is too short to spend with people who suck the happiness out of you. If someone wants you to taste life, they'll make room for you. You shouldn't have to fight for a spot. Never, ever label yourself with someone who continuously overlooks your assets. And remember, it's not the people who stand

HAPPINESS C3

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SHERMAN'S LAGOON BY JIM TOOMEY

DUSTIN BY STEVE KELLEY AND JEFF PARKER

TULDOK BY MARA COLI

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

TOMORROW TODAY You're self-sufficient and independent. You're also romantic, and you express your opinions in the most direct terms. Your birthday falls in the Chinese zodiac's year of the ox. Those who share your birthday are self-reliant, ambitious, and sometimes opinionated. Others admire your courage and determination. Some consider you stubborn, envious, and sometimes spiteful. Others admire your courage and determination. Some consider you stubborn, envious, and sometimes spiteful. Make a conflict in all life. **Birthdays** All born today, Ashton Kutcher, Kristi Hedges, actor Sarah Silverman.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) It's easy to go overboard today. Don't. You might spend too much money on something you later regret. Be careful. **TAURUS** (April 20 to May 20) You might be overly generous to family members today, especially females. Do you really have to buy them everything they want? Think differently to avoid the need to spend money you don't have.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Be discreet with dealings involving employees, associates, or clients. Keep your business private. Don't share this with co-workers and/or they'll be out before you know it.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) This is a good day for business and finance, but you might be sidetracked by romance. You might overlook something, or you might spend too much money. Or, be careful.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) Today the Moon is in your sign, which makes you a bit busier than others may expect. Don't let other tasks or co-workers sidetrack that crucial file nearest at hand.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) You feel quite selfless today. It's a wonderful quality, you're willing to put the needs and wants of others before your own. You'll feel better for it tomorrow.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) You feel romantic and enjoy the company of others today. Whether it's social interaction or romantic entertainment, your exchanges with friends, in public, be self-indulgent and overindulgent.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) It's not only lucky, when it will be. Use your lucky, especially finances, partners, business and gifts. Be aware of this. You might give the impression of concealing something.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) It's important to be accurate in everything today. You want to travel, talk to people from different backgrounds, read, attend and learn as much as possible. You have a flair for communicating today.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) Be tactful, sensitive and tolerant with others with some your way today. However, if you are determined that you or you want to make a specific statement or something be prudent.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) You might have to accomplish a hallway when dealing with others today because the Moon is in early opposite your sign. Take care to be patient. Be accommodating.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) You'll enjoy working with others today. People are happy and easygoing. However, don't accept more than you can handle.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that each row, column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. For more programs or www.sudoku.com

Concepts Sudoku — By Dave Green

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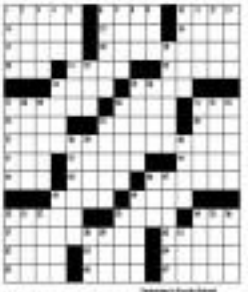
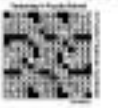
CROSSWORD PUZZLE





How Bettina Osmeña healed her hyperacidity

Turn page C1

put it to my report. When I add them to the fruit salad, people think it's dressing," she says.

Ever since AloeCure was launched in the Philippines last October, the sales have been phenomenal. In the first three months, Organic Basket, the Philippine distributor, gathered over 500 dealers.

Natural buffer

When her up-country business was hit by the global recession, mild-spirited Bettina Osmeña looked for an alternative route to success. What's the next big thing? Why not go organic? Why not do some more cardio with her diet, she **still experienced acid reflux** and popped antacids for years.

In a health trade fair in the US, a turquoise sign showing a fire hydrant declaring that AloeCure would revive

or of the immune system. Hence they also soothe the linings of the digestive tract, nutrient rich compounds from covering the liver and prevent the formation of kidney stones.

AloeCure contains malic calcium, a natural defense against high acidity in the stomach. It arrests the hydrogen atomic that overstimulate the hydrochloric acid in the stomach. The malic calcium neutralizes stomach acid production so that the nutrients can be assimilated and the bacteria is destroyed.

Cleanser

AloeCure also has polysaccharides that moisturize the skin. As aloe penetrates the skin, it energizes the fibroblasts to reproduce more quickly (thereby promoting more collagen and elastin to improve the skin tone. The aloe also has a binding effect on the cells of the outer layer of the skin, making it more tensile. This is why Cleopatra's female pointed out the improvement on her skin tone.

Quirico has benefited from AloeCure's internal cleansing products. People with constipation owned by them. The bad extract or sap contains anthraquinones, an organic compound with a powerful laxative effect. The aloe sets chemicals that rate the movement of food through the bowel. With improved protein digestion and absorption, an increase in water in the canal makes it bulkier.

Quirico lost some 20 lbs and dropped from size 34 to 32 with AloeCure, and-

pled with classes in Plaza Fortin. "I. Dubao on the parky stuff you eat. It's keep going in the bathroom," she wrote.

Although there are many aloe vera products on the market, Osmeña points out that AloeCure has undergone the most stringent certification from the country's food administration such as American Global Health Group, makers of AloeCure, do not use chemicals in cultivating their ingredients. The fertilizers are organic and there are no chemical residues from herbicides and pesticides. "We use the cleanprocess and cleanest 3 make him drink AloeCure with his orange juice. He looks good for his age."

Call 632-8884-1.0 (2561) or e-mail info@aloecureph@yahoo.com.

Take charge of your own happiness in 2012

From page C1

by your side when you're at your best, but the ones who stand beside you when you're at your worst, who are your true friends.

3. Stop worrying about your problems. Since Dana found out, it wasn't be easy. There is no person in the world capable of flawlessly handling every punch thrown at them. We aren't supposed to be able to instantly solve problems. That's not how we're made. In fact, we're made to get upset, sad, hurt, stumble and fall. Because that's the whole purpose of living—to face problems, learn, adapt and solve them creatively. This is what makes humanity noble as the person we become.

3. Stop lying to yourself. You can lie to anyone else in the world, but you can't lie to yourself. Our lives improve instantly when we make decisions and live and treat different choices we can make a reality between ourselves. Read "The Road Less Traveled."

4. Stop putting your own needs on the back burner. The most painful thing is losing yourself in the pressures of loving someone too much, and forgetting that you are special, worthy, help others; but help yourself, too. If there was ever a moment to follow your passion and do something that matters to you, that moment is now.

5. Stop trying to be someone you're not. One of the greatest challenges in life is being yourself in a world that's trying to make you like everyone else. Someone will always be prettier, smarter, richer and more talented. Never be you. Don't change just so that people will like you. Be yourself and the right people will love the real you.

6. Stop trying to hold on to the past. You can't start the next chapter of your life if you keep rereading your last one.

7. Stop being scared to make a mistake. Doing something and getting it wrong is, at least, 10 times more productive than doing nothing. Every success has a trail of failures behind it, and-ev-

ery failure is leading toward success. You end up regretting the things you did not do far more than the things you did.

8. Stop burying yourself in old mistakes. We may love the wrong person and cry about the wrong things, but no matter how things go wrong, mistakes help us find the person and things that are right for us. We all make mistakes, have regrets, and even regret things. But you are not your mistakes, you are not your struggles, and you are here now with the power to shape your day and your future. Every single thing that has ever happened in your life is preparing you to be in a moment that is set to come.

9. Stop trying to buy happiness. Many of the things we desire are expensive. But the catch is, the things that really matter to us most are free—love, laughter and working on our passions.

10. Stop exclusively looking to others for happiness. If you're not happy with who you are on the inside, you won't be happy in a long term relationship with anyone else, either. You have to love yourself and be happy in your own life first before you can share it with someone else.

11. Stop being idle. Don't drink too much or you'll create a problem that wasn't even there in the first place. Take control of your life and take decisive action. Making progress involves risk. Period.

12. Stop thinking you're not ready. Nobody ever feels 100 percent ready when an opportunity arises. Because most great opportunities in life force us to guess beyond our comfort zones, which means we won't feel totally comfortable at first.

13. Stop getting involved in relationships for the wrong reasons. Relationships must be chosen wisely. It's better to be alone than to be in bad company. There's no need to rush. If something is meant to be, it will happen—in the right time, with the right person and for the best reason. Still in love when you're ready, not when you're lonely.

14. Stop expecting new rela-

tionships just because old ones didn't work. In life, you'll realize that there is a purpose for everyone you meet. Some people will test you, others will use and still others will teach you. But most importantly, some will bring out the best in you.

15. Stop trying to compete against everyone else. Don't worry that others are doing better than you. Competition is not beating your own record every day. Success is a battle between you and yourself only.

16. Stop being jealous of others. Jealousy is the art of examining someone else's blessings instead of your own. Ask yourself this: "What's something I have that everyone wants?"

17. Stop complaining and feeling sorry for yourself. Life's cancelballs are thrown for a reason—to test your path in a direction that is meant for you. You may not see or understand every thing the moment it happens, and it may be tough. But either look at those negative cancelballs thrown at you in the face. You'll often see that eventually they led you to something and you will be.

18. Stop holding grudges. Don't live your life with hate in your heart. You will end up hurting yourself more than anyone you have unforgiveness in say saying, "What you did to me is okay" is saying. You are going to let what you did to me affect my happiness forever." Forgiveness is not just for other people, it's for you, too. If you treat forgive yourself, more and more you do better next time.

19. Stop letting others bring you down to their level. Refuse to lower your standards to accommodate those who refuse to raise theirs.

20. Stop wasting time re-gladening yourself to others. Your friends don't need it and your enemies won't believe it, anyway. Just do what you know in your heart is right.

21. Stop doing the same things over and over without taking a break. The time to take a deep breath is when you don't have time for it. If you keep doing what you're doing, you'll keep getting what you're getting. Sometimes, you need to distance yourself to see things clearly.

22. Stop overlooking the beauty of small moments. Enjoy the little things, because one day you may look back and discover they were the big things. The best portion of your life will be the small, numerous moments you spend smiling with someone who matters to you.

23. Stop trying to make things perfect. The real world doesn't reward perfectionists, it rewards people who get things done. Read "Getting Things Done."

24. Stop following the path of least resistance. Life is not easy, especially when you plan on achieving something worthwhile. Don't take the easy way out. Do something extraordinary.

25. Stop acting like every-thing is fine if it isn't. It's okay to fall apart for a little while. You don't always have to put on a show and be strong, and there is no need to constantly prove that everything is going well. Cry if you need to—it's healthy to shed your tears. The sooner you do, the sooner you will be able to smile again.

26. Stop blaming others for your troubles. The extent to which you can achieve your dreams depends on the extent to which you take responsibility for your life. When you blame others for what you're going through, you give others power over that part of your life.

27. Stop hoping to be every-thing to everyone. Being as is impossible, and trying will only hurt you out. Be making one person smile can change the world. Maybe not the whole world, but their world. To someone you're loves.

28. Stop worrying so much. Worry will not strip tomorrow of its troubles, it will strip today of its joy. One way to check if something is worth dwelling over is to ask yourself this question: "Will this matter in one year's time? Three years? Five years?" If not, then it's not worth worrying about.

29. Stop focusing on what you don't want to happen. Focus on what you do want to happen. Positive thinking is at the forefront of every great success story. If you awake every morning with the thought that something wonderful will happen in your life today, and you pay close attention, you'll often find that you're right.

30. Stop being unappreciat-ed. No matter how good or bad you have it, wake up each day thankful for your life. Someone somewhere else is desperately fighting for theirs. Instead of thinking about what you're missing, try thinking about what you have that everyone else is missing.

Get a new iPad 2 for the new you

THE FUN OF the holidays may be over, but the gift-giving is not, for the month of January. Krunal (generic name: Cobalt) is overcoming its iPad 2 special giveaway promotion to lucky members of the farnical weight-loss club, Club New You.

Club New You was launched last May for all Krunal users to assist and accompany them on their weight-loss journey by giving them various rewards via online stores, contests and questions. Krunal users can also get a special membership card with which they can avail of great discounts, reward points, and more and exciting offerings and promotions.

To celebrate the New Year, Club New You is continuing to raffle off units of the new iPad 2. The winner is open to all Club New You existing members and new members who will join during the promo period.

Just purchase a box of 21 capsules or the 6+1 promo pack of Krunal in leading drugstores nationwide. Each box of 21 capsules will give you three raffle entries, while an 8+1 promo pack will give you one raffle entry. Scratch off the protective foil on the Club New You sticker on the outside of the box to receive your unique 12-character code. Visit www.newyou.com.ph and login to your account or create one if you are a new member. Lastly, input the code which will result in raffle entries to the promo and reward points. It's that easy.

Every two weeks, more than 14 lucky winners of a brand-new iPad 2, (16 GB with Wi-Fi capability) will be selected randomly. Members can join the multiple draws by participating. Started on Jan. 23. Visit www.newyou.com.ph and www.facebook.com/clubnewyou, or call (02)7770000/9000 for more details.

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Options Studio partners with Fit & Fabulous

OPTIONS Studio general manager Kenneth Cobbler (seated, third from left) with his finest STOTT Pilates instructors and members of the management team

CHRIS Almeda and Camille Jocson

JERALD Jocson is awarded instructor of the Year. Right: Vico, Sergio, Alma, Mercy, Vicky, Sue and Rod

OPTIONS STUDIO Manila (OSM) celebrated its first Christmas at Grappa's Restaurant in Greenhill 3 in affinity statement to its partnership with Fit & Fabulous Inc. for its Fourth Branch opening this month at the Podium.

OSM general manager Kenneth Cobbler, his staff and Pilates instructors welcomed Ace Kispel, president of Fit & Fabulous, with a five-course dinner prepared by chef Christian and Pearlie Lizano. The event started with greetings from the OS CEO, Joe Hidalgo, and STOTT Pilates instructor from/encouraging director Ole Ingram, followed by the presentation of the campus ambassadors and dessert from Grappa's.

Also present and recognized during the event were Options Studio Manila instructor of the Year Jerald Jocson. Jocson, with OSM's team of competent Pilates instructors who come from different disciplines—such as dance, martial arts, fitness and other sports, well-worth Reformer and Cadillac routines in addition to the private and group STOTT Pilates, Targeted and specialized programs.

To inquire about Options Studio Manila and its Unlimited Group Pilates, Yoga and Targeted programs, please call 8850-804, 5533334 or log in to www.optionsstudio.com.ph.

Why some people see things others don't

INNER AWARENESS

Justice T. Escareses

RAVE TOO ever wondered why some people can see the change or reason others can't? Or think and hear things others can't, although they are not hallucinating?

This line puzzled me. And the answer did not come as easily and would have seemed.

But of the problem lies in the fact that the paradigm in much of the western world is the rational, materialistic and scientific paradigm.

This paradigm has narrowly defined reality to consist only of things that are tangible or palpable to the senses or scientific instruments, namely they must have weight, size, shape, smell, taste and sound, and they must obey the laws of Newtonian physics. Also, the object observed must have an existence independent of the observer, etc.

If there is anything that exists outside the scientific paradigm, it is regarded as hallucination or imagination, and therefore worried. This has become the dogma of the scientific world for the last 400 years.

Fortunately, a growing number of scientists and researchers have begun to question the assumptions underlying the scientific paradigm.

There is no doubt that science has produced a generally accepted methodology to test the validity or validity of an object, event or phenomenon. It must be statistically significant, it must be observable by man's five senses or, at least, by his scientific instruments, and it must be repeatable and not merely be a random event.

Criteria

But such criteria are good and valid only when applied to material or physical objects and events. They cannot be applied to non-physical things or phenomena. To insist on applying the same criteria for nonmaterial things would be to be blind to the world of the mystical and the spiritual, which is intangible and invisible.

What most scientists fail or refuse to realize is that there are at least two ways of looking at reality. One is through our physical senses and the other through our peripheral (cell) spiritual or internal faculties. The former uses our five senses to only physical reality, the other we use our metaphysical reality.

American astronaut Edgar D. Mitchell, the sixth man to set foot on the moon, who has a doctorate degree in science, pointed out in the book "Psychic Exploration: A Challenge for Science":

"The denial of the nonmaterial aspect of life...is rooted participation in the unseen side of existence—its deeper purpose and its sources of meaning and direction...death is the end of the because life is only physical.

"Psychic research represents a direct challenge to this distorted world view of reality by calling into question the assumed primacy of objective data and materialism.

"Telepathy demonstrates that there is an informational linkage between people that goes beyond the laws of science as they are presently understood.

"Clairvoyance challenges our understanding of sensory perception...

"Precognition and retrocognition challenge our concepts of time."

"Psychokinesis or telekinesis challenges our concept of energy and energy transfer."

"So, for most psychic healing, which is as benign into question our concepts of physiology and medicine."

Fringes

Dr. Mitchell asserted that studies in these fringes of science indicate that "mind and consciousness can operate in a distance from the body, interacting with the outside world in ways that cannot be explained in terms of known science."

Dr. Jean Houston, the Depot Dalton teacher of UCLA anthropologist Carlos Castaneda, calls the everyday physical reality, the "Portal," and the spiritual reality, the "Original." The Bagual is the world of wonderful reality, of magic, heaven only to those who "see" and "hear" with the heart.

Because such a world exists beyond the reach of our physical senses and intellect, it is deemed to be nonexistent and purely imaginary by materialist science. But quantum physics is challenging such a limited and myopic view of reality. Quantum physicists have discovered that in the quantum world, Newtonian physical laws no longer apply. What apply are the laws of consciousness.

Note: Join the next Basic EXP and Intuition Development Seminar on Jan. 14-15. It is on 3 to 9 p.m. at Rm. 309 Prime Plaza (2 Annapolis St., Greenhill, Metro). Tel nos. 8637241/ 8120890 or mobile no. 09209402942. E-mail: justinthescape@yahoo.com. Our website www.innerawareness.com.ph

Be ready to seize the year

INSIDE OUT

Gary Quirino

TO KEEP up with the pace of a new year, ready to confront all its challenges, one needs to be prepared. But preparedness requires being armed against the enemies of health and wellness, namely, pollution, stress and diminished immunity. If life is a gift, then we need to treasure it. And one of the best ways to do so is to nurture our body, mind and spirit.

Here are some helpful suggestions:

Jump-start your life

There is no better way to do this than to simply make up your mind to join the wellness bandwagon. It has been said (or wrote) from tail to lifestyle: It's what you do from day to day that will enable you to successfully handle every task you decide to take on.

Wise women treat internal cleanings when they undertake spring cleaning of their homes. Here's how:

• Sugar overload—Whether or not you agree in to an occasional dessert craving after meals, (like do you know that your body gets sugar intake is high. This includes the "hidden" sugars in sauces, sweets, breads, dressings, salted drinks and alcohol. In fact, just about everything you consume contains some kind of sweetening, whether it's honey or sugar (white, brown, turbinado, etc.).

Overloading on sugar will slow you down eventually even if you swim vigor within the first 20 minutes of consuming it. Eventually, your sugar high will taper off and the energy gained quickly when the sugar need for yet another high. Thus, the sugar craving.

To neutralize the sugar rush, take alpha lipoic acid, a sugar antioxidant, and eat leafy greens with every meal to prevent the sugar from being stored as fat. Also, a little good or cinnabar in your diet, as a known high blood sugar tonic. Its potency comes from the limonene, due to the presence of monoterpene. Just shower that it has an overall hypoglycemic effect on the blood, thus lowering blood glucose levels.

• Sleeplessness—If you can rule out emotional problems, stress, and alcohol as food lingering late in the morning, then it's probable your lifestyle does is ranging you off-balance. Most adults require six to eight hours daily to the recommended length of sleep daily. If you go without sleep or with less sleep than you should, then your nervous system is overtaking on control. Lack of sleep, here again!

• Be exercise...There is an alarming upswing in the incidence of Type 2 diabetes in the world. This and other lifestyle diseases like cancer, heart disease and hypertension are directly connected to the brain and the beauty factor. Through nutrition or weight training, the human growth hormone is released. Simultaneously, it lowers stress and cortisol, the stress hormone. Its get moving today and every day. You will only look and feel better.

• Stress out—While stress is good to a certain extent. But if stress levels are not relieved, persistent daily stress will wear your body out. Your adrenal glands will become exhausted until you are without energy. Manage your stress by doing simple things to relax you. Try to find time for relaxation. Balance between work and leisure is key. Also, looking on the bright side of life is always a plus reason in determining your immune system's resilience.

Thyroid watch

It weighs only an ounce and lies in the neck, just below the larynx, your voice box. The thyroid gland may be small, but to rule as your health is big. Responsible for producing thyroxine and triiodothyronine, the thyroid (part of the endocrine gland) controls the body's oxygen consumption (thyroxine), the metabolic rate), promotes growth and is needed by proper brain development. When it produces too much hormones, the metabolism speeds up, but when it produces too little, the metabolic process slows down. Thus, if you are having difficulty losing or gaining weight, have your thyroid checked.

Hypothyroidism is the main culprit in the weight problems experienced by men and women in their 30s. Hyperthyroidism, on the other hand, is the main suspect in the sudden weight loss experienced by those in the 40s-50s age range. It is this area, incidence and elimination and mild palpitations are experienced by those with thyroid conditions. Left untreated, these could lead to more serious health concerns like diabetes.

In his book "Hypothyroidism: The Unsuspected Illness," Broda O. Barnes, M.D., explains that people with diabetes have low basal temperatures. If you think your thyroid may be over or underactive, just learn a test you can do at home.

Before retiring, place a thermometer by your bedside. Upon waking up, take your temperature. For 10 minutes, keep the thermometer in your armpit. If the temperature is not between the normal range of 97.8-98.2°F, then you may have a thyroid condition. A temperature below this range by one to three degrees is indicative of hypothyroidism. If you're one of those figures above, then you could have hypothyroidism. In any case, put your doctor's visit.

Self-empowerment

No matter what conditions may be ahead or setbacks you could be facing, always remember that there is an invincible energy source within you. The indestructible part of who you are, your spirit and heart, respond to an immortal God. Thus, the empowerment of the divine is within possibility; it is in our own soul's DNA.

So, reach deep within yourself. Find your answers. Open the gates. And unleash your indescribable energy for the better world today.

Affirm today: "I am an energy in perfection."

Love and Light!

A new yoga revolution—flexibility not required

AS SOON as you wake up in the morning, you're already stressed. Fortunately, there is yoga.

Dhon Arturo Manila yoga instructor Hanin Ego, M.D., says, "The regular practice of yoga relieves stress, improves circulation, helps control blood pressure, stretches, tones and strengthens your leg muscles, and allows you to strengthen your core better than any other single activity. In some ways, yoga can be likened to meditation in motion. There is a misperception that only flexible people can do yoga, when, in fact, they can build their flexibility through regular practice of yoga."

Last listed in Pasig, Dhon Arturo Manila is the country's largest and fastest growing yoga center for small-service center with a pool of highly qualified Yoga Alliance-registered teachers, offering a wide variety of classes.

The first environmentally friendly studio registered with the Green Yoga Association, Dhon Arturo Manila offers four studios of studios with over 200 square meters of studio space, which could fit an intimate group of 25 or a full class of 60 students.

Carrying the design philosophy, heating and lighting process by Kenneth Cobonpue, the Ashram is environment-friendly, with its engineered hardwood sprung floors, high ceiling and use of natural ventilation. It has foot studios, shower and locker rooms, and a specialty boutique.

The Ashram also uses only energy-efficient T5 and LED lighting, as well as answers an eco-friendly air-con by Energy and changing rooms. Toilets and showers are completely biodegradable and bath & soaps

THE URBAN Ashram team (front row) Martin Hyo, JP Almonzan-Cua (middle row) Patricia Cua-Almonzan, Marisol Pamaganan-Ang-Bacungan-Lim, Ivy Evangelista-Bautista (back row) Lyssa Pidapatan and Mary Macadeng

The MEDICard Health and Wellness Bulletin

Take Charge, Doc!

HEALTHY HABITS FOR A HEALTHY NEW YEAR II

HEALTHY HABIT #8: TAKE A DAILY WALK

Walking is a gentle, low-impact exercise that can make you into a regular form of fitness and health. Walking is a form of exercise accessible to most fitness enthusiasts. It's safe, simple and doesn't require practice. And the health benefits are many.

Studies have shown that walking for 30 minutes per day can:

- Reduce risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- Increase your energy
- Help control weight
- Reduce risk of colon cancer
- Help control body weight
- Increase your sense of well-being
- Help prevent osteoporosis
- Help relieve stress and depression
- Help control diabetes
- Help with back pain
- Increase mental alertness

And you don't have to take time out of your busy schedules to obtain the new benefits by incorporating walking into your daily life. Just head outside every morning. Those during phone calls, walk around while you're brushing your teeth, or do the same while you're watching television.

STAY Because CHEST IS WITH A FRIEND MAKE IT A CALLING SHORE!

Devising challenge videos are plenty of other opportunities to move those legs:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Walk to the store
- Window shop at the mall
- Take your children and visit your local outdoor recreational parking lot
- Find better shoes

ARE YOU KNOW: Walking for one mile burns nearly as many calories as jogging for one mile, it just takes longer!

www.medicard.com

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Willie Revillame back on top

TOP-SELLING albums in the country for the week Dec. 26-Jan. 1, based on Odyssey Music & Video's nationwide sales reports.

How far on page 000

Coco wants to make peace with Matteo

I GOT to chat with Coco Martin at the New Year's party of our dear sponsor, Bodie. He was in high spirits as he went table-hopping and posed for snapshots.

Since it's time for a fresh start, Jun he wiped the slate clean with **Matteo Guidicelli** after their brief row over Maja Salvador.

"Nagpapakitakitaan pa kami," he says. "Hindi kami sa ganoon pero di pa dumating sa ganoong pagkakataon. Maganda naman ang takbo ng pagkakaibigan namin. Ayaw ko lang ng ganoong sitwasyon. Ito naman ang mga taong nakasama ko sa mga pelikula ko. Ayaw ko lang din kasi ng pagkakaibigan namin

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The Perfect Venue

MOVIEWORLD

Willie Revillame back on top of OPM chart

From page B1

GIANT V-No. 7, OPM

OPM

1) Willie Revillame, "Sanding Sandling," Viva Records; 2) Angeline Quinto, "Patuloy Ang Pangarap," Star Records; 3) Bamboo, "No Water, No Moon," PolyEast Records; 4) Nelson Arriola, "It's a Wala Wala Christmas," Ivory Music; 5) Thomas Archer, "Dance Mega In The Floor," AMH Music; 6) Aimee Cueli, "Sacrebleuyou," Viva Records; 7) Gary Valenciano, "With Love," Star Records; 8) Brianna, "Acoustic Pick," ABS Music; 9) Joel Mabilin, "Breathe Again," Universal Records; 10) Jonah Geronimo, "One Heart" Viva Records

Overall

1) Nelson Arriola, "The Hottest Hits ... Ever," MCA Music; 2) Jaypee Justin, "Mr. Single," Universal Records; 3) Willie Revillame, "Sanding Sandling," Viva Records; 4) Angeline Quinto, "Patuloy Ang Pangarap," Star Records; 5) Taylor Swift, "Speak Now: World Tour Live," MCA Music; 6) Adele, "Live At The Royal Albert Hall," Warner Music; 7) Nelson Arriola, "Best Of Praise & Worship Music," Ivory Music; 8) Bamboo, "No Water, No Moon," PolyEast Records; 9) Adele, "Live At The Royal Albert Hall," Warner Music; 10) Nelson Arriola, "It's a Wala Wala Christmas," Ivory Music

Coco wants...

From page B1

MATTEO Guidicelli

Manz, though. I probably will re-support Ate Kris [laughs]. Ayaw lang naman magpili at ako ang kaya ni Tony when I conquered him to a sidehook [a wrestling move]. When I was in Palawan with my friend, they dared me to eat a caldereta. Parang 'Fear Factor' kagaya sila where I did live sting. It's like my recovery from my breakup with Tony. I had to face and overcome it."

After all the detours her heart took, it now happily embarks on her "Road Trip" and she's on the way to a place of total bliss.

E-mail: watermelon@abs-cbn.com

odyssey
MUSIC & VIDEO

NEWPORT CINEMAS

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
12:45pm, 3:45pm, 6:45pm, 10:00pm

ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS in 2D
11:20am, 1:35pm, 3:45pm, 5:55pm, 8:05pm, 10:15pm

SHERLOCK HOLMES 2
11:45am, 2:15pm, 5:35pm, 8:15pm, 11:30pm

ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS in 3D
11:15am, 1:45pm, 6:15pm, 7:15pm, 10:15pm

SHERLOCK HOLMES 2
11:15am, 1:45pm, 6:15pm, 7:15pm, 10:15pm

FROM THE WRITER OF "GLADIATOR"
CORIOLANUS

THIS MOVIE IS NOT YET RATED BY THE MTRCB

BATTLE BEGINS on JAN. 18

NATURE TEACHES BEASTS TO KNOW THEIR FRIENDS

RALPH FIENNES GERARD BUTLER

A POWERFUL NATION UNDER SIEGE

A WAR WITHOUT END

"STUNNING" THE DAILY MAIL

"A TRIUMPH" THE GUARDIAN

FROM THE WRITER OF "GLADIATOR"

CORIOLANUS

Ayala Malls

MOVIE TIME

GLORIETTA 4
1: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
11:05, 1:15, 3:25, 5:35, 7:45, 9:55 pm
2: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
11:20, 2:10, 5:00, 7:50, 10:40 pm
3: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00 pm
4: MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4
11:40, 2:35, 5:15, 7:55, 10:50 pm
5: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
11:50, 1:55, 4:00, 6:05, 8:10, 10:15 pm
6: A MOTHER'S STORY
11:40, 1:50, 4:00, 6:10, 8:20, 10:30 pm
7: ENTERING NG INA MO
12:00, 2:10, 5:30, 7:30, 10:10 pm

GREENBELT 1
1: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
11:45, 2:00, 4:15, 6:30, 8:45, 11:00 pm
2: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
1:00, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30 pm

GREENBELT 3
1: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
11:15, 4:00, 6:30, 8:40, 10:45 pm
2: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
12:00, 3:00, 5:50, 8:50, 11:30 pm
3: A MOTHER'S STORY / SEGUNDA MANO
12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00 pm
4: MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4
1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00 pm
5: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS / SHERLOCK HOLMES 2
1:00, 3:45, 5:30, 6:45, 7:30, 10:00 pm

ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
12:00, 3:00, 6:45, 8:15, 10:45 pm
2: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
1:30, 3:45, 5:55, 8:00, 10:10 pm
3: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS / SHERLOCK HOLMES 2
12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30 pm
4: ENTERING NG INA MO / MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4
12:00, 10:00 pm / 4:00, 7:00 pm
5: A MOTHER'S STORY
12:30, 3:00, 5:45, 8:15, 10:45 pm

ayala center cebu
1: A MOTHER'S STORY
1:30, 3:45, 5:55, 8:00, 10:10 pm
2: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
1:30, 3:45, 5:55, 8:00, 10:10 pm
3: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
1:00, 3:45, 6:45, 9:45, 9:55 pm
4: ENTERING NG INA MO / MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4
1:00, 3:00, 5:15, 7:30 pm / 9:30, 11:45 pm

MARQUEE
1: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00 pm
2: ENTERING NG INA MO / MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4
12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00 pm
3: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
12:00, 2:00, 4:45, 6:30, 9:00 pm
4: A MOTHER'S STORY
12:00, 2:00, 4:45, 6:30, 9:00 pm

MARKET! MARKET!
1: A MOTHER'S STORY
11:40, 1:50, 4:00, 6:10, 8:20, 10:30 pm
2: ENTERING NG INA MO
11:40, 1:50, 4:00, 6:10, 8:20, 10:30 pm
3: SEGUNDA MANO / MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4
11:00, 1:45 pm / 4:00, 6:45, 9:30 pm
4: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
1:15, 4:15, 7:00, 9:45 pm
5: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
11:40, 1:45, 4:00, 6:05, 8:10, 10:15 pm
6: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS / SHERLOCK HOLMES 2
12:00, 2:15, 4:20 pm / 6:15, 9:00 pm
7: RESERVED

TRIANON
1: MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4
11:30, 1:00, 4:30, 7:45, 10:30 pm
2: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
11:00, 1:30, 4:45, 7:00, 10:00 pm
3: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
1:00, 3:45, 6:45, 9:30 pm
4: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2
12:00, 2:00, 4:45, 6:30, 9:00 pm
5: ENTERING NG INA MO / SEGUNDA MANO
11:15, 1:30, 7:45, 9:45, 10:15 pm
6: A MOTHER'S STORY
11:45, 1:00, 4:00, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 pm
7: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
11:15, 2:00, 4:45, 7:30, 10:15 pm

ALABANG
1: ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 3
1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00 pm
2: SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS
11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:00, 9:45 pm
3: A MOTHER'S STORY
12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00 pm
4: ENTING NG INA MO, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 4
11:45, 2:00, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00 pm

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'Fantasy' has to be played for real, for believability and empathy's sake

IN "FANTASY 2," Rissy Revilla makes for a physically trim but psychologically flabby Flavia, the revised film franchise's resident Teen and surrogate of the oppressed populace of a fabled, mythic land that looks vaguely like our own, albeit transported to an indecisive, destructive past.

The film is loaded with special effects, soundtrack hooks and reincarnations of fire-lipsticked imagination, and enough villains of the super- and supra-natural sort to people hell itself.

Trial, because the central character of the movie's ensemble here lacks genuine core-type and

Nestor U. Torre

visionary resolve, many of its hyped-up encounters between good and evil fall flat.

To make the proceedings even more disaffecting, the movie's main villain is played in diametrically over-the-top fashion by Phillip Salvador, who is given free rein to ramp up the most surreal gestural—and accepts the blanket invitation with great relish.

The conflict between the psychologically neat and hottom Flavia and the zombie-of-the-week is more perfunctory than Cha's fantastic balance and chimera's rising action would, as the production ends up frequently out of whack.

"Fantasy 2" can still be enjoyed for some effective visual moments, like its flying dragon sequences, but that's about it.

Also off-putting is the excessively on-cute or porma participation of a number of child actors in the movie, including a couple who've done much better—**[see page 2, section A]**

Here, they're made to act sassy as all get-out, and they're a

ICONIC Revilla and Marian Rivera in "Fantasy 2"

grossly emotional and emphatic nuisance in reverse.

Sixty: It's been announced that there will be a "Fantasy 3" movie two years from now, we hope that star-producer Revilla pushes his production team to come up with a revised sequel that's more genuinely heroic and involving than this one.

Yes, the film franchise's resident fantasy, but it should be played for real, as the desired believability and empathy can be achieved. Don't rely so much on visual magic and spectacle, make Flavia more truly heroic and emotionally and "Fantasy 3" should do much better. Fingers crossed).

Fantasticating types

Perhaps these actors generally fall short because they think that, since they're in a "fantasy" action drama, they should be playing fantasticating types, instead of blood and guts people.

So, they're content to "approximate" their assigned characters, instead of being fully present and "mission statement" that they don't try hard enough to vividly and actualize their roles' stated objectives.

So, parts of the movie may sometimes work on the fantasy and "message" levels, but not deeply enough to convince up a

Benefit show features True Faith

TRUE Faith performs on Jan. 14, 6:30 p.m. at the St. Paul College of Paranaque (SPCP) grounds, 632 Quirino Avenue, La Huerta, Paranaque.

Proceeds of the concert will go to SPCP Batch 1987's "Adopt a Pantician" scholarship program, which aims to provide full academic scholarships to the school's underprivileged but deserving students. Call Tess Castro (09063400795) or Viviana Sevilla Brias (09178880723).

TRUE Faith performs on Jan. 14 at St. Paul College of Paranaque.

K-Pop at Ayala Malls

South Korean boy band 2B A is scheduled for a series of live performances and autograph signings at the following Ayala Malls: Trinoma Activity Area, Quezon City, Jan. 11; Glorietta Activity Center, Makati City, Jan. 13; and Market! Market!, Bonifacio Global City, Jan. 14. All shows are at 6 p.m.

'Marunu Mia!' opens Jan. 14

The international touring production of the stage musical "Mamma Mia!" opens Jan. 14 at the Tenghaleng Resource Auditorium of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Roxas City. Written by British playwright Catherine Johnson, the musical adapts 22 songs of Swedish pop group ABBA to weave an original, humorous story of romance, filial ties and wedding past hurts and mistakes. The show runs till Feb. 12. Call 891-9999.

Ateneo-La Salle musical

"Kinder Ateneo-La Salle The Musical" is scheduled for 38 performances starting Jan. 27, 8 p.m. at the Meralco Theater, Ortigas corner Meralco Avenue, Pasig City. Written and directed by Jaime del Mundo, with music by Ed Gerbolian and lyrics by Joel Trinidad, the musical is set in 1998 and depicts the parallel conflicts between two families whose members take their school loyalty seriously. Call 891-9999.

"Mamma Mia" is about romance, filial ties and resolving the past.

Disco days, dancing...

From page B1

ABBA songs are performed in "Mamma Mia!" seven miles fit for a Filipino audience. That's the recurring thought when we saw the musical at the Solaire Theater in Manila, once in June last year.

Viewers by British playwright Catherine Johnson, the story is about 20-year-old Sophie, who wants to find her real father on her wedding day. She invites three men who had intimate relations with her mom, Donna—who's now inclined to make a comeback.

So the daughter sends wedding invites to all three men, without her mother's knowledge.

Much can be the musical numbers, especially "Chiquitita" when Donna's friends (they all used to perform as a girl group) console her while she comprehends the dilemma of dealing with her three men. One of Donna's friends, Rosie, has an uncanny similarity with the looks and mannerisms of Toni Gonzaga's Baby Rodriguez.

More than that, many of the songs are bound to trigger memories of one's lost youth... After saying, hey, admit it, you used to go to disco and ride at "dancing queens."